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LAURIE SHEPARD

SIENA 1531: GENESIS OF A EUROPEAN HEROINE

In *Gli'Ingannati*, Isabella, a wealthy nubile woman of Modena, lures Fabio, the page of a local merchant, into the entryway of her home and there they exchange a kiss and the promise of a tryst. In the sixteenth-century comedy, the kiss took place off stage, recounted and embellished by Crivello and Scatizza, two servant-voyeurs. Fabio is with Isabella at his master Flamminio's bidding, supposedly wooing her for him, but quite obviously helping himself to his "master's dish," as Scatizza puts it.¹ Isabella is deceived: the young man she lusts after is Lelia, who has disguised herself in male attire in order to be near Flamminio who courted and then abandoned her. The erotic volatility of the kiss, in sixteenth-century performances exchanged between two young men, one dressed as a woman, the other playing the role of a woman dressed as a man, has captured the imagination of more than one modern critic, as *Gli'Ingannati* continues to generate interest and pleasure.²

The comedy is important to the Anglophone world because Lelia is the first Viola of *Twelfth Night*, an ingénue who disguises herself as a page in the service of her beloved. Lelia inspired a long line of heroines who play with gender, not merely to pass through the streets unmolested, but to pursue and win the love of a man. In this article I argue that Lelia, who may be read as a stock comic character, also defies the notion of the "theatre-gram."³ To account fully for the genesis of this transgressive bourgeois

¹The kiss occurs in Act II, scene vi. Here I am using Penman's translation, but all other translations of the *Gli'Ingannati* are from Giannetti and Ruggiero.

²Most recently the comedy has been studied by Laura Giannetti, Karen Newman, and Maggie Günsberg. The 2003 translation of the comedy by Giannetti and Ruggiero suggests that the kiss be staged, a more dangerous proposition, at least in the sixteenth century. John Reynolds (or Rainolds), a don at Oxford in Shakespeare's day, warns against the staged kiss because "the kiss of a beautiful boy is like the kiss of 'certain spiders': 'if they do but touch men only with their mouth, they put them to wonderful pain and make them mad'" (Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, 27).

³The term was developed by Louise George Clubb to describe the basic theatrical units of plot or character which Renaissance comic writers combined and recombined in the production of comedies where innovation is for the most part understood as variation of stock elements.

heroine, who commands audience allegiance as she struts between her female and male identities, requires an examination of the way in which her personal story is bound up with the political situation in Siena during the first half of the sixteenth-century.

First performed during Carnival in 1532, *Gl'Ingannati* is the second or third play of *Gli Intronati* (the Thunderstruck or Dunderheads), an academy established by the Sienese elite sometime between 1525-27. The group met with the intention of banishing all thoughts of politics, and dedicating itself entirely to the arts: philosophy, law, music, arithmetic, Greek and Latin literature and the edification of the Tuscan language (Petracchi Costantini, 42). Nevertheless, matters of state do intrude in the three plays composed by an anonymous committee of the academy: *I Prigioni*, *Aurelia*, and *Gl'Ingannati*.⁴ My concern is not the explicit political content of the comedies, which has already been addressed by Newbigin and Celse-Blanc, but the way in which the political situation in Siena in the years immediately following the Sack of Rome (1527) contributes to the genesis of Lelia.

According to the prologue of *Gl'Ingannati*, the comedy was composed in three days [“che, quasi in tre dì hanno fatto una commedia” (that they’ve put this comedy together in barely three days)], for Carnival in 1532.⁵ Newbigin proposes that a version of the play which did not include the character of the Spanish soldier Giglio may have been in preparation as early as the winter of 1529-30, in expectation of the arrival of Emperor Charles V in Siena (Newbigin, “Politics”, 131)—which eventually was postponed. Two years later the academy dusted off the comedy and with minor revisions organized a performance, perhaps in great haste as the prologue states. My interpretation of *Gl'Ingannati*, which places particular emphasis on the scene in which Lelia explains her predicament to the pub-

⁴Precise dating is difficult: *I Prigioni*, the first comedy of *Gli Intronati*, and based on Plautus’s *Captivi*, is dated by Newbigin between 1529-30 (“Politics,” 124-125). *Aurelia*, based on *Decameron* V.5, was composed in the middle of 1531 according to Newbigin, with the exception of the prologue that was added later (Newbigin, “Politics,” 128). Celse-Blanc, who edited *Aurelia*, argues on the basis of internal evidence that the comedy was composed in the summer of 1532 (Accademicci, *Aurelia*, 26). *Gl'Ingannati* was first performed during Carnival in 1532. This date is supported by the comedy’s prologue which “refers to its companion piece, *Il Sacrificio*, which the 1534 manuscript and all the early editions attribute quite clearly to Epiphany (6 January) 1532” (Newbigin, “Politics,” 130-131).

⁵All citations of the play are from Borsellino’s 1962 edition.

lic (I.iii), convinces me that the play would not have been suitable entertainment for the emperor and Spanish king, Charles V, with or without the character of Giglio.

The plot, drawn from Plautus's *Menaechmi* and Bernardo Dovizi's *La Calandria*, as well as vernacular prose works like the *Decameron*, concerns the erotic adventures of apparently identical twins who are in fact male and female.⁶ In what is standard fare for comedies, culturally determined gender roles are confused: old men brag about their sexual prowess, a young woman aggressively pursues her lover, not realizing that he is a woman, and two male lovers are passive, one settling for Isabella whom he has known for only an hour and found attractive and wealthy, the other not courting for himself and in the end, entrapped by a pathetic tale of an elderly nursemaid, marrying a woman for whom he has avowed his loathing. The second ingénue, Isabella, barely has a voice at all in the comedy. She is presented through the eyes of servants and her foolish father Gherardo, and the portraits are crude: Gherardo, in a recital rife with unintended irony and sexual innuendo, imagines his daughter to be a meek and pure "colombina" who spends her day before an altar (III.vi), and the servant Pasquella complains that there is nothing worse than serving a young woman in love "so lathered up that she can't find any peace, day or night [...] always scratching between her legs, stroking her thighs, or running up onto the porch or over to the window" (II.ii). Isabella accepts as her husband a man who resembles the woman she loves; she is tricked by a pretty face and cannot tell sister from brother. Most interesting is Lelia, who not only dresses as a male, but also adopts, at certain points, a detached ironic voice that in Italian literature is strictly the privilege of male protagonists.

Gl'Ingannati inspired more plays and prose works than any other sixteenth-century Italian comedy. Its authors have never been identified, although the academy's comedy committee probably included the play-

⁶Comic twins are already different sexes in Bibbiena's *La Calandria*. Examples of novelle that may have come into play in the conception of the comedy are *Decameron* II.3, in which the daughter of the king of England disguises herself as an abbot on a pilgrimage to Rome to escape marriage with the aged king of Scotland, and *Decameron* II.9, where Ginevra, wife of Bernabo Lomellin, disguises herself as a man to survive in a hostile world and finally bring to justice the villain who has ruined her reputation. Another story in the *Decameron* that might have inspired the authors of *Gl'Ingannati* is III.9, an analog of Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well*, in which Giletta of Nerbona heroically pursues the man she loves, despite his disdain for her. Cerreta cites Bottasso, who sees the influence of Ariosto's *I Supposti* on the *Gl'Ingannati*; in this comedy the student Erostrato assumes the role of a servant to gain access to his beloved (Cerreta in *La commedia degli Ingannati*, 1980, 23).

wright and letterato Alessandro Piccolomini (1508-1578). Information about early performances is also scarce. After the initial performance, the only other on record in Italy took place in Naples in 1545 (Cerreta in *La commedia degli Ingannati*, 1980, 17). However, the comedy was published seventeen times in the sixteenth-century (Cerreta in *La commedia degli Ingannati*, 1980, 34-35). Its publishing success is attributable to a number of factors. The French humanist and theorist Charles Estienne, who translated the comedy into French as *Les Abusez* and published it in the 1540s, admired its complexity and elegant dénouement. In his translator's introduction, he praises the intrigue of *Les Abusez* and its Italian model which offers "changing themes, introducing things unexpected and hidden, then disclosing them, leaving one matter to take up another, then returning to the first again, leading everything dexterously and stylishly to the conclusion" (Salingar, *Shakespeare*, 187). Estienne also praised the scenery and the idiomatic use of Tuscan prose in his play's model, which he tried to imitate in his translation. All this for the spectators' "plaisir incroyable" (Estienne, *Les Abusez*, iii). Girolamo Ruscelli included *Gl'Ingannati* in his volume of exemplary Italian comedies in 1554.

Lelia is responsible in large measure for the comedy's success; unlike the majority of unidimensional characters in Renaissance comedy, Lelia becomes, by turns, confused, desperate, reckless and witty. Melzi explains that "from this prototype a new figure is born that will spread throughout the Italian and subsequently, the European stage: the demure, sometimes self-effacing woman who is ready to sacrifice herself for love" (Melzi, "From Lelia," 70). Not demure and self-effacing, according to Giannetti, Lelia is "a major player, a female character who is courageous, clever and strong." Giannetti reads Lelia's transgression in terms of the situation she faces: Lelia, "the daughter of the rich Virginio, brought up in an upperclass household in Modena, cross dresses and takes on the identity of a page named Fabio with the twofold goal, to escape the marriage plans of her father and to be near her beloved Flamminio, who has forgotten her" (Giannetti, "On the Deceptions," 59-60). Cerreta observes that *Gl'Ingannati* advanced the potential of the comic ingénue on the European stage, from the standard retiring (and indeed often entirely absent) marriageable daughter to that of a prominent character, although two decades after *Gl'Ingannati*, theorists were still recommending that the "maiden [...] not come to speak on stage" (Cerreta in Accademici, *La commedia degli Ingannati*, 1980, 24, and quoting Giovan Battista Giraldi Cinthio; my translation). Finally, *Gl'Ingannati* offers a young man the opportunity to play a man and a woman in the same show, in all likelihood to great comic

effect and personal Thespian triumph (the heroine Lelia, dressed as herself or as the page Fabio, never appears on the scene with her twin Fabrizio). The comic potential of the role—the flustered confusion of Lelia/Fabrizio, the swagger of Fabrizio—is written into the script.

Although her strong will and immediate distress are indisputable, early in the comedy we learn why Lelia is different than the typical ingénue. In Act one, Scene three, Lelia, disguised as Fabio, wanders the streets of Modena looking for her nurse Clemenzia whose advice she seeks; the latter is mortified to discover that the young coxcomb trying to catch her attention is, in fact, her charge, Lelia. Reacting to Lelia's attire, Clemenzia demands: “Adunque, hai tu perduto il nome di vergine?” (But have you lost, then, the name of virgin?) Lelia responds with an oblique but stark reference to events that are already familiar to her nurse: “Il nome, no, ch’io sappi, e massimamente in questa terra. Del resto si vuol domandarne gli spagnuoli che mi tenner prigionia a Roma.” (The name, no—not as far as I know, especially here in Modena. For the rest, you’ll have to ask the Spaniards who held me prisoner in Rome.) The words, startling from the mouth of a comic heroine, reveal a mental landscape that may well have been shared by many Italians in 1529, the setting of the comedy, in the aftermath of the catastrophic Sack of Rome. Here we meet a comic ingénue hinting at a personal history that is anything but protected and innocent.

Lelia explains her decision to disguise herself as a young man in terms of the pain she suffers. Death might be preferable to her present situation.

CLEMENZIA: Io vo’ saper perché tu vi vai e perché sei uscita del monistero. Oh! Se tuo padre il sapesse, non t’ucciderebbe, povera te?

LELIA: Mi cavarebbe d'affanni. Tu credi forse ch’io stimi la vita un gran che?

(CLEMENZIA: I want to know why you’re running around like this and why you left the convent. Oh, if your father knew, he’d have your head, poor child!

LELIA: That would solve my problem, Do you think I value my life all that much?)

Lelia insists that her misery is the consequence of her thwarted love for Flamminio:

“Oh che sorte è la mia! Amo chi m’ha in odio, chi sempre mi biasma; servo chi non mi conosce; ed aiutolo, per più dispetto, ad amare un’altra.”

(Oh, how unlucky I am! I love someone who hates me, who is always cursing me. I serve someone who doesn’t even recognize me. And to make matters worse, I help him in his pursuit of another woman).

Nevertheless, Lelia's devotion to Flamminio is intimately bound to the despair and humiliation she suffered during and after the Sack of Rome. Flamminio saved her from her morbid depression and his love moved her to again take an interest in life.

LELIA: Sai che, dopo il miserabil sacco di Roma, mio padre, perduta ogni cosa e, insieme con la robba, Fabrizio mio fratello, per non restar solo in casa, mi tolse dai servizi della signora marchesana con la quale prima m'aveva posta; e costretti dalla necessità, ce ne tornamo a Modena in casa nostra per fuggir quella fortuna ed a viver di quel poco che avevamo. [...]

CLEMENZIA: Perché mi dici tu quel ch'io so meglio di te? [...]

LELIA: [...] Sai anco quanto, in que' tempi, fu aspra e dura la mia vita e, non pur lontana dai pensieri amorosi, ma quasi da ogni pensiero umano: pensando che, per essere io stata in mano di soldati, che ognuno m'aditasse, né credevo poter vivere sì onestamente che bastasse a far che la gente non avesse che dire.

(LELIA: You know that after the horrible sack of Rome, my father, having lost everything, including my brother Fabrizio, in order not to live alone took me away from the Lady Marchesana in whose service he had left me earlier. Our poverty forced us to return to our home here in Modena to escape our evil fortune and to live as well as we could with what little we had. [...]

CLEMENZIA: Why are you telling me what I know better than you do? [...]

LELIA: [...] You remember also how difficult and hard my life was then. My thoughts were not only far from love but far from virtually everything human. For I was afraid that having been in the hands of Spanish soldiers, everyone would be pointing at me. I was certain that no matter how honorably I lived, people would never stop talking.)

Lelia describes her experience in terms of isolation and morbid shame. The extended period of alienation from people and events taking place around her would probably be described as a symptom of post-traumatic stress by modern psychologists. But Lelia is a resiliant young woman. She goes on to recount how the merchant Flamminio, a friend of her father, began to pay attention to her, and even seemed to fall in love with her, and how the love that he inspired rekindled her desire to live.

The scene recounts Lelia's tragedy and establishes her intellectual superiority, an intelligence sharpened by loss and love. Lelia is the only character who is never deceived in *Gli'Ingannari*, she is the opposite of the archetypical comic character, Calandrino, who constantly conflates reality with his own confused reading of signs and his inflated opinion of himself. The space between reality and sign is painfully clear to Lelia. Dressed as a man, she is a woman. Dressed as a man in the manner of a prostitute, she is not

a fallen woman. A virgin engaged to the wealthy old merchant Gherardo, she may be virgin in name only. She knows the most intimate thoughts of the man she serves with heart and hand; he does not know she exists. Still, Lelia parries with reality and transforms pain with her wit.

CLEMENZIA: Saresti mai diventata femina del mondo?

LELIA: Sí, che io son del mondo. Quante femine hai tu vedute fuor del mondo? Io, per me, non ci fu' mai, ch'io mi ricordi.

(CLEMENZIA: [...] oh, Lelia, have you become a woman of the world, a whore?

LELIA: Yes, I'm of the world. How many women have you seen from outside the world? As far as I'm concerned, I don't remember ever being outside the world.)

Lelia recognizes herself most definitely as a woman of this fallen world and she is intellectually detached enough to mock the absurdity of the literal phrase. Her ironic collapsing of literal and metaphorical signifiers calls to mind Guido Cavalcanti's "Signori, voi mi potete dire a casa vostra ciò che vi piace" (Gentlemen, in your own house you may say to me whatever you wish).⁷ Lelia tells the audience that she has personally suffered both violation and shame, and yet she is virtuous. Referring to the ranks of

⁷The text is from Boccaccio, *Decamerone*, 757 and the translation from Boccaccio, *Decamerone*, trans. Musa and Bondanella, 401. This kind of detached irony is a trope reserved for male protagonists in Italian literature. Lucrezia in the final scene of the *Mandragola*, is scornful rather than playful or aloof. Other female protagonists exaggerate irony to the point of sarcasm. For example, in Donato Giannotti's *Il Vecchio amorooso* (*Commedie del Cinquecento*, ed. Borsellino, 1-83), an angry Dionora Lanfranchi greets her husband at the door of their home with a smile in III.vi, explaining, "E so ch'egli è obbligo delle mogli, quando i mariti tornano, mostrarsi loro di lieta cera, acciò che essi ne piglino allegrezza, con la quale ricompensino i fastidi che hanno fuori" (And I know that it is a duty of wives, when husbands return home, to show a happy face, so that they may draw pleasure from it, by which means they make up for all the irksome business they attend to while away from home [my translation]). A parallel to Lelia's rhetorical wit occurs in Poggio Bracciolini's letter to Leonardo Bruni in 1416 about the heresy trial of John of Prague at the Council of Constance. According to Poggio, when John is asked about transubstantiation, he responds: "Tum quidam: 'atqui aiunt te dixisse post consecrationem remanere panem;' tum ille: 'apud pistorem remanet panis,' inquit" (Prosatori, 232). [Then someone: But they claim that you said that bread remains after the consecration; then he: Bread remains at the bakery. [my translation]).

female transvestites who roam the city she demands, “Oh! Fra tante ribalte non ne può andare una buona?” (Oh well, among so many wicked women isn’t there room for one good one?).

Giannetti’s reading of the same scene focuses on the ambiguous pleasure that Lelia discovers in playing “her masculine masquerade” (Giannetti, “On the Deceptions,” 61). Giannetti writes that Lelia, “fascinated from the first with her *gioco*, seems willing *to play* in the public space of the city, normally reserved for men, risking her honour as a chaste young woman of good family and/or as a young male page!” (Giannetti, “On the Deceptions,” 61). Musing on her plight, Lelia reveals the same lucid and ironic perceptiveness that we hear in her subsequent conversation with Clemenzia: “Oh come mi starebbe bene che qualcun di questi gioveni scapestrati mi pigliasse per forza e, tirandomi in qualche casa, volesse chiarirsi s’io son maschio o femina!” (Oh, it would serve me right if one of those young rogues forced me into one of these houses to see for himself whether I was a boy or a girl!). However, in my reading of the scene, Lelia risks losing the “name” of virgin in this city not only because she is “fascinated from the first with her *gioco*,” she is willing to gamble because she has already lost her reputation in her own mind (“For I was afraid that having been in the hands of Spanish soldiers, everyone would be pointing at me.”). Lelia does not flinch in her analysis of the desperation of her plight and, like so many characters in the *Decameron*, from Melchisedech and the Marchioness of Montferrato to Chichibio, she has the wit to transform self-pity and fear into a game that is ultimately productive.

The Sack of Rome defines Lelia’s past and future and is in no way secondary to the plot of *Gli’Ingnannati*. The event occurred after the defeat of the French army at Pavia in 1525 and the failure of Pope Clement VII’s anti-imperial League of Cognac (1526). The army of Emperor Charles V, at that point unpaid, hungry, and essentially leaderless, moved rapidly south towards the opulent and fabled Eternal City. The soldiers entered Rome at dawn on 6 May 1527, did not encounter much resistance, and began the brutal destruction of the city and its inhabitants. Luigi Guicciardini found words to express the desperation and resignation of many Italians: “We look at one another like frightened sheep penned up in the slaughterhouse, expecting any moment to see our resources, our families, and our beloved homeland in the hands of barbarous and bestial nations thirsting beyond all limit for our riches and our blood” (Guicciardini, *The Sack of Rome*, 61). The Sack of Rome signaled the end of any illusion that Italian leadership might possess the political will or intelligence necessary to restore authority. Yet, the Sack of Rome was only the most traumatic point in a long season of war.

Between 1492 and 1527 Italy became a battleground as France and Spain fought for sovereignty over the peninsula: it was an era of political turmoil, famine—as armies pursued a scorched-earth policy, disease—recurrent plague, the arrival of syphilis from the New World, and precipitous demographic decline.

Given the reduced circumstances of Lelia's father, Virginio, and his natural desire to preserve the money that remained for his son, should Fabrizio have survived, Virginio is only too happy to marry his daughter, who has been in the hands of the Spanish soldiers, to the elderly Gherardo. In Lelia's unblinking assessment of her situation, the anonymous playwrights suggest more profound consequences of the ongoing chaos: despite the appearances of a return to normality in the years following the Sack, the carnivalesque world-upside-down has become permanent in Italy. Virginio has abdicated his paternal role by not protecting his daughter from the soldiers. They stand in his place: uneducated, brutal, peasant-soldiers who, as prison guards, have been granted the authority to protect Lelia's honour or to violate her person. Virginio's name was probably intended to evoke the familiar story of Virginius, the Roman father who ran a dagger through his daughter's breast when he realized that he would not be able to defend her from the lust of the Roman magistrate Appius Claudio.

In Italy, traditional feudal warfare fell victim to a military strategy based on gunpowder. And as Carlyle remarked, gunpowder “makes all men alike tall” (quoted by Fuller, *Armament*, 83). Without conscription, Spanish, French and Italian armies were composed of mercenaries: professional soldiers as well as peasants, debtors and common criminals granted amnesty when they enlisted. Italians had long resisted the arming of peasants and workers, fearing social upheaval; they relied instead on an old military organization tied to the system of the “condotta” which assigned prominence to traditional feudal forces (Lenzi, *Il sacco di Roma*, 6). At the beginning of the Italian wars, armies were composed mostly of cavalry, that is, of men wealthy enough to afford a horse and full armour, but by 1528 90% of the army was composed of infantry (Fuller, *A Military History*, 91). Guicciardini noted the change: “nowadays four, six, or twelve thousand untrained foreigners, poorly armed and lacking leadership, harass, consume, and overpower this country of ours” (Guicciardini, *The Sack of Rome*, 62). “Untrained” is the operative word here: teaching a man to shoot a musket took almost no time compared to training a long bowman, or, of course, a traditional knight. Emperor Charles V, who first invaded Italy in 1516, used Italy as a training ground for his new recruits, before dispatching the soldiers to the Netherlands or Germany (Hale, *War and Society*, 164).

In the complex political realignment that followed the Sack of Rome, Charles V could not ignore Siena, a strategically important, pro-imperial city. His principal concern seems to have been that urban violence among the Sienese political factions or *monti*, and particularly between the pro-imperial *Popolani* and pro-French *Nove*, might compromise his interests there (Celse-Blanc, "Alessandro," 20-22, 33). Charles ordered don Lopes de Soria to the city as ambassador and protector of imperial interests and, following the ouster of Alfonso Piccolomini, Duke of Amalfi, in November 1530, elevated don Lopes to be the *de facto* ruler of the city.⁸ The emperor also sent a garrison of soldiers plus a small number of cavalry to Siena. Dandelet has recently suggested that the portrayal of the Spanish soldier as crude and violent is best understood as a literary *topos* (Dandelet, *Spanish Rome*, 37), but there is plenty of literary and archival evidence of the hardship suffered by the Sienese in this period at the hands of the Spanish troops.⁹

The presence of the occupying garrison of armed foot soldiers must have underscored the political impotence of the citizens, their anxiety

⁸Under don Lopes and the military captain don Ferrante Gonzaga, the exiled *Nove* were restored to power in Siena. The important point is that internal and external politics were inextricably bound as the *monti* used imperial intervention or French support as a means to acquire power in the city.

⁹In *Aurelia*, for example, there are various complaints: the servant Famelico (naturally) laments his terrible hunger (I.ii) perhaps caused by the fact that the Spanish do not allow planting to go on (I.iv). Spanish soldiers are accused of burning down homes (I.iv; V.i), and of course the principal complaint is that don Lopes's request is, in fact, a command, whether in military matters or affairs of the heart (I.viii). The Sienese Consiglio generale, 247, 13 October 1530, calls for reform and the return of peace to the city "tanto più quanto lo exercito ogni giorno danegia, sachegia e trascorre tutto il Dominio" (Celse-Blanc in Accademi, *Aurelia*, 21, n. 42). The entry on 8 January 1531 addresses the financial hardship the billeting of so many soldiers causes: "et perché sono a la guardia de la città 300 fanti et lo illustrissimo Signor Don Lopez ne menarà centocinquanta a li quali bisogna di subbito provedere li denari per essere il tempo de la paga et similmente si trova a servitio di V. S. il capitano Morale con venticinque cavalli et il bargello con quaranta fanti et dieci cavalli et concorrendo altre infinite spese a la nostra Republica, et trovandosi exaustissima di denari per le disordinate spese et straordinarij travagli passati. Ricorriamo al supremo senato per aiuto in tanta necessità di denari, senza i quali non si può trattenere li stipendiati, né senza loro fare si può; di modo che se di subbito non ci si provede può, nascere scandolo tanto grande quanto immaginare si possa" (Celse-Blanc in Accademi, *Aurelia*, 33, n. 87).

aggravated by the disdain and fear that bourgeois and patricians had always felt towards the urban and rural lower classes, whether Italian or foreign.¹⁰ A problem of class more than nationality, the Sienese and the Accademia degli Intronati welcomed the Spanish nobility, and in turn the Spanish Emperor Charles V made concessions to loyal Sienese.¹¹ Even Don Lopes de Soria was initially received with great pomp and honor (Celse-Blanc in Accademici, *Aurelia*, 19). The daily reminder of the Spanish victor was the garrison of 300 armed soldiers. In *Gl'Ingannati* the suggested violation of Lelia captures most viscerally the Sienese's fear of and hatred for the Spanish common soldier. Hostility is also directed towards the soldier in the character of a *miles gloriosus* who roams the streets and bullies the citizens (or at least their servants) with impunity. Giglio pursues the servant Pasquella, speaking a Spanish interspersed with Italian words, and she responds in Italian. They understand one another perfectly: both are peasants lying through their teeth to cheat each other. Giglio threatens to burn Gherardo's home if Pasquella does not return a rosary he has given her (IV.vi), and he later swears to slash her face for the same reason (V.v).¹²

¹⁰ Disdain for the poor is a staple in Italian literature. Petrarch criticizes Boccaccio's *Lectura dantis* as a prostitution of the Muse for the sake of the "fecacia plebeia" (Garin in *Umanisti*, 17-18). Coluccio Salutati describes the *popolo minuto* who participated in the Ciompi rebellion as "pestis illa" and "truculentissime belue" (Garin in *Umanisti*, 26).

¹¹ Evidence of the lack of hostility towards the emperor, at least in principle, is the fact that the Intronati were commissioned by the city to prepare a play in honour of the arrival of the emperor in Siena in 1529-30. Charles V, importuned by prominent Sienese, removed the inimical Don Lopes de Soria from power in March 1531, restored a Piccolomini, the Marchese del Vasto, to command the troops there, and reduced the size of the garrison to a hundred soldiers (Celse-Blanc in Accademici, *Aurelia*, 23). Cerreta pushes the idea of class further, seeing the soldier Giglio as a scapegoat for the humiliating presence of the Spanish soldiers billeted in the city; Giglio courts and harrasses the servants by turns, but the bourgeois and noble characters are spared the boarishness of the common soldier. "Questa scissione sembra provenire da un inconscio desiderio di non contaminare il mondo idealistico e sentimental dell'eroina con elementi farseschi, propri del mondo inferiore della gente meccanica, più volgare e rozzo" (Cerreta in Accademici, *La commedia*, 30-31). In my opinion, however, Cerreta's reading treats the painful memories expressed by Lelia in I.iii too lightly.

¹² Abusive competitiveness is not limited to Giglio and Pasquella. All the characters, with the exception of Lelia and Isabella, buttress their intentions with violent threats, and none more than the disappointed lover Flamminio, who will "cut off his [Fabio's] lips and his ears and cut out one of his eyes, and give them all

A survey of some of the works inspired by *G'lIngannati* reveals the elimination of those aspects of the Sienese comedy most inimical to comic convention or international politics. The soldier Giglio disappears in the first translation of the work and any reference to the violation of Lelia by Spanish soldiers shortly thereafter. Although we know from the prologue to Cecchi's *L'Assaiuolo* that the Sack of Rome became a *topos* to explain the financial and personal disarray of a family at the opening of a comedy,¹³ the actual horrors of the sack are not considered comic material by other writers, and there is certainly no similar account of personal pain from the mouth of a comic ingénue. As a theatrogram, the specificity of Lelia's pain is blunted; the many cross dressing heroines she inspired are motivated by love, but not by the desperation to renew a love that had rescued Lelia from her shame and perception of being "far from virtually everything human." As Andrews observes "the dramatists saw their task as to generalize, to pinpoint precisely what might be felt and said by all languishing heroines, rather than to make them and their language startlingly individual" (Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios*, 63).

Estienne's early translation of *G'lIngannati* into French, mentioned above, is very faithful to the original, but Giglio and the scenes in which he appears are eliminated. The Spaniard Lope de Rueda uses the essential love intrigue of *G'lIngannati* in *Los Engañados* (editio. princeps 1567), but Lelia's imprisonment during the Sack of Rome and the obnoxious Giglio are cut. The Italian Lelia was thirteen at the time of the sack (I.i), the Spanish Lelia a child. A decade later, as a young woman in love, the Spanish Lelia does not have the intellectual audacity or detachment of her Italian counterpart. In the scene where she reveals her ploy, the Spanish Lelia addresses not her nursemaid, but her tutor Marcelo and proceeds to defend her decision to dress as a man on the basis of fortune and love. The

to her [Isabella] on a plate" (IV.viii). Perhaps we should attribute the verbal violence to comic excess, but it lends a tone of aggressive futility to this "mirror" of the foibles of the upstanding citizens of Modena and their servants. There is also an incongruous reference to the fact that the governor who will not countenance the bearing of arms by citizens (IV. ix).

¹³"Né sia chi creda, che questa commedia si cominci o dal sacco di Roma, o dall'assedio di Firenze, o da spandimenti di persone, o da sbaragliamento di famiglie, o da altro così fatto accidente" (Cecchi, *L'Assiuolo*, 113 in *Commedie del Cinquecento*). ("And don't anyone think that this comedy originates from the Sack of Rome, or from the Siege of Florence, or because persons became displaced, or families had to flee, or some other such event", Cecchi, *The Horned Owl*, 3).

playful ingénue has been transformed into a timid and embarrassed maiden. She does not refer to the Sack of Rome in personal terms, but as just retribution for Christian sin.¹⁴ Lope de Rueda could hardly have been interested in repeating the accusation that Spanish soldiers had raped young girls.

The lapsed Dominican monk Matteo Bandello (1485-1561) retells the story of Lelia as part of his collection of tales published in 1554.¹⁵ Bandello elaborates on the horrors of the sack almost twenty years after the event.

And to not take more of your time, I say that here in this dear and honorable company there is not one of us who does not fully recall that the Germans and the Spanish sacked Rome so cruelly in the year of our Lord 1527, and although the sins of that city merited punishment, nevertheless, those who sacked it, being Christians, did not do a good thing, although I understand that the majority were Lutherans, converts, and Jews. Be that as it may, they behaved worse than Turks and committed such enormous and cruel acts against God and His saints that it is impossible to recall without great pain (my translation from Bandello, *Tutte le opere*, 287).

Despite his attempt to rationalize the event, Bandello does not spare the leadership that allowed soldiers to commit sacrilege, pillage, and rape.

Although the majority of the pillagers and robbers of both sacred and profane things and the rapists of the holy virgins consecrated to Mary were, as has already been said, enemies of the faith of Christ, nevertheless, could those who governed (them) not have prevented so many acts of sacrilege, incest, rape, homicide and other crimes, and realized that many who practiced the violated religion suffered harm? (my translation from Bandello, *Tutte le opere*, 287).

¹⁴“Bien tendréis en la memoria cómo, cuando por nuestros pecados Roma fue saqueada...” (I.ii). (“You well remember how, when Rome was sacked because of our sins...”; my translation). The Spanish Lelia is repeating the widely diffused interpretation of the sack first articulated by Alfonso de Valdés, the imperial secretary, in his *Dialogue of Lactancio and an Archdeacon*.

¹⁵There is a link between *Gl'Ingannati* and the Bandello tale that I have not investigated yet. In his introductory letter Bandello invokes the good memory of Count Guido Rangone, a soldier and Modenese noble who served both Pope Clement VII and the French. In *Gl'Ingannati*, Lelia refers to the fact that her father was a friend of Guido Rangone, which made him persona non grata to some people in Modena (I.iii).

The heroine of his tale, renamed Nicuola, does not suffer the fate of Lelia thanks to two Spanish soldiers who wager that her wealthy father might offer a more generous ransom if she is restored to him intact.

Barnabe Riche's "Of Apolonius and Silla," probably the most accessible source of the story for Shakespeare, reflects many of the constituent parts of the original Italian comedy. Silla, daughter of the lord of Cyprus, falls in love with Apolonius, a duke of Constantinople, who had spent some time as a guest in her father's court. When Silla boards a ship for Constantinople in pursuit of Apolonius, her beauty captivates the captain. Seeing no possibility of preserving her virtue, Silla prepares to commit suicide, but is foiled by a violent storm that destroys the ship. She reaches land and resumes the trip to Constantinople, now disguised as her brother, Silvio. Riche's inclusion of the threat of rape suggests that Shakespeare's choice of names, Viola, may actually be a distant evocation of Lelia violata or violée.¹⁶

Generally we read Italian comedies of the first half of the sixteenth-century as elite entertainment: the product of the hedonistic, indulgent society that sought to display its cultural superiority and entertain itself as it produced and consumed comedic teatricals. *Gli Ingannati* breaks the mold. We rarely hear a voice like Lelia's painful but detatched account of imprisonment and shame. Lelia, the first woman to dress in men's clothes in order to be near her lover, is the most transgressive character in the comedy as well as the most virtuous. She dresses as a man to save her life and to save herself from despair. Lelia's audacity might be compared to Pam-pinea's, when the latter suggests to her small band of young and unmarried female friends that they leave the corruption of Florence to seek their own survival in the countryside. Although the *Decameron* was often pillaged for a good (and/or lascivious) tale, as Gherardo himself suggests in the first scene of *Gli Ingannati*, one of its essential messages is that in troubled times virtue must be understood in personal terms and that in such times virtue often transcends convention.¹⁷

¹⁶This idea was suggested to me by my colleague Matilda Bruckner.

¹⁷In the *Decameron*, Dioneo reminds us in the conclusion to the Sixth Day, of the need for unconventional solutions in times when common virtue is insufficient: "—Donne, io conosco ciò che io ho imposto non meno che facciate voi, e da imporlo non mi poté istorre quello che voi mi volete mostrare, pensando che il tempo è tale che, guardandosi e gli uomini e le donne d'operar disonestamente, ogni ragionare è conceduto. Or, non sapete voi che, per la perversità di questa stagione, li giudici hanno lasciati i tribunali? Le leggi, così le divine come le umane, tacciono? E ampia licenzia per conservar la vita è concedura a ciascuno? Per che, se alquanto s'allarga la vostra onestà nel favellare, non per dover con

Another way we might interpret the invention of a comic character such as Lelia is as a symbol of her authors, the intelligentia of Siena in 1531: colonized but, despite appearances, undefeated, its virtue and wit intact. The comedy may be a political allegory for occupied Siena in the period following the Sack of Rome. In its playfulness it may also be an attempt to heal the wounds of the body politic. Whether it is useful or not to speculate on the political significance of the genesis of a heroine such as Lelia, it is imperative that we recognize that as a comic ingénue she is unique: in her pain, in her personal evocation of a tragic event in Italian history, and in her ironic wit.

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con l'opere mai alcuna cosa sconcia seguire ma per dar diletto a voi e a altri, non veggio con che argomento da concedere vi possa nello avvenire riprendere alcuno. Oltre a questo la nostra brigata, dal primo dì infino a questa ora stata onestissima, per cosa che detta ci si sia non mi pare che in atto alcuno si sia maculata né si maculerà con l'aiuto di Dio. Appresso, chi è colui che non conosca la vostra onestà? La quale non che i ragionamenti sollazzevoli ma il terrore della morte non credo che potesse smagare" (Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 776-777). ["Ladies, I am aware, no less that you are, of what I have ordered, but the objection you have raised is insufficient to move me to change my mind, for I believe that times are such that as long as ladies and gentlemen take care not to act immorally, every form of speech is permitted. Now, are you not aware that because of the corruption of these times, judges have abandoned their tribunals, the laws, both of God and man, have fallen silent, and everyone is granted free rein to protect his own life? And so, if you were to stretch the bounds of your chastity somewhat with your storytelling, never meaning to follow this with improper actions, but only with the intention of providing pleasure for yourselves and for others, I do not see how in the future any plausible argument could be used to criticize anyone. And besides, from the first day until this very moment, our company has behaved most honorably, regardless of what has been said here, and it does not seem to me that any act whatsoever has sullied our honor, nor, with God's help, will it ever be sullied. Moreover, everyone knows how virtuous you are, and in my opinion no amusing little stories or even the terror of death, for that matter, could make you any less virtuous than you are" (Boccaccio, *Decameron*, trans. Musa and Bondanella, 401).

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SERGIUS KODERA

RENAISSANCE READINGS OF THE MYTH OF
ARISTOPHANES FROM PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM* (189C-193D):
MARSILIO FICINO, LEONE EBREO, GIORDANO BRUNO

For more than a century Ficino's commentary on the *Symposium* (1469) was imitated by several authors who wrote philosophical treatises on love that circulated widely among European readers.¹ It is curious and interesting, for the transmission of works and their interpretation, that Plato's text on love, filled as it was with implicit and explicit homoeroticism, should have had such a profound impact on sixteenth-century Italian culture. Indeed, the transformation of Platonic erotic doctrines into something compatible with the moral standards of both Christianity and Judaism is a fascinating chapter in the history of the domestication of pagan discourse and a textbook case of deliberate misreading. This article examines three Renaissance philosophers—the Christian Neo-Platonist Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), the Sephardic Jew Leone Ebreo (ca. 1480 - ca. 1520), and the radical thinker Giordano Bruno (1548-1600)—in order to discuss their respective interpretations of a crucial speech in the *Symposium*: Aristophanes' account of the myth of the birth of love, the myth of primordial beings. The assimilation of this part of the *Symposium* was especially difficult for the Christian and the Jewish traditions because in this passage Plato speaks approvingly of homosexuality and lesbianism, thus outlining a Greek anthropology relating to the Athenian city state vastly different from that of later societies.² In commenting and attempting to

¹This article was originally written for a conference on "Sexualities and Knowledges" organized by Margurite Waller and held at the University of California, Riverside, 22-24 February 2002. An earlier version was presented at a workshop held at the University of Vienna in June 2000. I wish to thank Alice Pechriggl, Valery Rees, Marguerite Waller and Konrad Eisenbichler as well as several anonymous reviewers for their encouraging remarks, criticisms, and valuable suggestions.

²The terms homoerotic and heterosexual are no doubt anachronistic; in the present context, they are meant only to denote sexual relationships between males or between men and women and they do not refer to the constitution of subjective identities. In his ground breaking study on homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence, Michael Rocke characterizes the situation as fol-

integrate such passages from an (otherwise welcomed) pagan authority into their own cultural environment, the authors under consideration felt obliged to spell out their own ideas about the relationships between the sexes, as well as the links between bodies and minds. In that context, Jews and Christians alike fell back on philosophical anthropologies that were more akin to their own respective discursive formations.

Plato in the Renaissance

To start with some well-known, but fundamental facts about the transmission of Plato's works, it should be recalled that during the Middle Ages few genuine texts from Plato were accessible in Latin, with the notable exception of parts of the *Timaeus*, in the versions of Cicero and Chalcidius. Nevertheless, Platonic philosophy had a very fine reputation among Christians, due in part to the praise that the perhaps most influential church authority, Augustine, gave to this pagan philosopher. In the *City of God*, we read that Plato was "nearer to the truth than the whole ancient troop of philosophers."³ This positive assessment must have contributed largely to the high esteem in which Plato was held at the beginning of the fourteenth-century (and indeed before). One prominent example is Petrarch (1304-74), who is reported to have obtained from Byzantium a Greek manuscript of Plato's dialogues; although it was one of his most treasured belongings, Petrarch had no Greek and, though he tried, was unable to find a translator for it.⁴ It was only with Leonardo Bruni (ca. 1369-1444), chancellor of the Republic of Florence and one of the foremost humanists of his day, that the Renaissance translation of Platonic works began. Bruni was modeling Plato into the foremost theoretician of *vita*

lows: "Some scholars, if they have not simply assumed that males who had sex with other males in this period were exclusively 'homosexual,' have adopted the seemingly more appropriate word 'bisexuality' to characterize men's interest in both sexes. But this anachronistic term is only a hybrid product of the sharply drawn contemporary categories 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual,' which were lacking in this society, and it probably misrepresents the cultural specificity of late medieval and early modern understandings of erotic experience and sentiment." (124) See also below.

³Augustine, *City of God*, 8, 5-11. For a more ambivalent assessment of Platonism by Augustine see his *Confessions*, 7, 9. The story of the reception of Platonic texts during the Renaissance has been told in great detail by Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*.

⁴Copenhaver/Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 127-128; Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*, 1:25-26.; Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers*, 11.

activa, or active life, a kind of cultural hero of the Ciceronian brand characteristic of much of fifteenth-century humanism. But Bruni only paraphrased parts of the *Symposium*. What was actually so difficult about the speech of Aristophanes?

Aristophanes' speech

In Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium*, Plato recounts a story about the origin of love and sexual desire. In the old days, he states, there were *three* species of human beings, not just two: double males, double females and a sort of mixed species; they had four hands and legs, two sets of genitals with a single head and two faces (189 DE), their shape was round, complete, forming a circle. The males descended from the sun, the females from the earth, and the mixed, androgynous sex was under the patronage of the moon. These people were twice as strong as ordinary people and were able to move effortlessly, as they supported themselves with their eight limbs, moving rapidly around and around in circles (190A).⁵ In this state of frightful power the primordial double humans decided to assault the Olympians, who—after some deliberation—decided not to kill their attackers (because otherwise there would have been no one left to worship the gods) but rather to punish and weaken them permanently by cutting them in halves, (190B-D). The effects were disastrous: “It was their very essence that had been spliced into two; so each half missed its other half and tried to be with it; they threw their arms around each other and longed to be grafted together. As a result, [...] they died of starvation and general apathy” (191A). As a remedy for this situation (and to prevent humans from dying out) Zeus ordered Mercury to move the genitals of the sliced halves to their front side, thus enabling them to have sex or, in the case of homosexual relationships, at least to relax and to continue living in a more balanced emotional state: “male female relationships leading to procreation and offspring, male relationships would at least involve sexual satisfaction, so that people would relax, get on with their work, and take care of other aspects in life”(191D).⁶

⁵Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Waterfield, 27. Ficino translates this and the following passages, Plato, *Opera omnia*, 1602, (1186B) as: “Postquam natura hominum ita divisa fuit, cum quisque dimidium sui agnitus cuperet, inter se concurrebant, circumiactisque brachiis se invicem complectebantur, conflari unum affectantes. Unde fame et torpore deficiebant [...].”

⁶Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Waterfield, 28; Plato, *Opera omnia*, 1602, 1186CD: “[...] per masculum quidem in foemina, hac de causa, ut si in amplexu vir foeminae commisceretur, genita prole speciem hominum propagarent. Sinautem

The desire for sexual union functions here as a substitute for a primordial unity, which remains, however, unrecoverable. Men and women descending from the mixed race are heterosexual, producing the highest quantity of adulteresses and adulterers respectively.

Any women who are offcuts from the female gender aren't particularly interested in men. They incline more towards women and therefore lesbians come from this group. (191E)⁷

And any men who are offcuts from the male gender go for the males. While they're boys, because they're slices from the male gender, they fall in love with men, they enjoy sex with them, and they like to be embraced by them. These boys are the ones who are outstanding in their childhood and youth, because they are inherently more manly than others. I know they sometimes get called immoral, but that's wrong: their actions aren't prompted by immorality, but by courage, manliness, and masculinity. [...] there's good evidence for their quality: as adults, they're the only men who end up in government. (192A)⁸

In an important shift, in this passage Plato links sexual orientation to the political structure of classical Athens, a city governed by a small number of men who practiced a sort of ritualised homosexuality that was intimately related to the maintenance of power.⁹ There is probably no need to highlight what sort of feelings this apology of male homosexuality, as well as the acknowledgement of lesbianism, might have induced in Renaissance Christians and Jews alike. The value of heterosexuality, the only possible

masculo masculus, satietate ab amplexu amoverentur, et ad res gerendas conversi victum, curarent."

⁷Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Waterfield, 28; Plato, *Opera omnia*, 1602, 1186E: "Quae vero mulieres mulieris pars existunt, haud multum viros desiderant, sed foeminas magis affectant, atque hinc foeminae quae foeminas cupiunt nascuntur."

⁸Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Waterfield, 28; Plato, *Opera omnia*, 1602, 1186E-1187A: "At vero qui maris portio sunt, mares sequuntur. At dum pueri sunt, utpote qui maris particula sunt, viros diligunt, virorumque familiaritate assidua congressuque gaudent: hique sunt puerorum adolescentiolorumque omnium generosissimi, quippe per natura prae caeteris omnibus sunt viriles. Hos quidam impudicos falso appellant. Neque enim impudentia ulla, sed generositate, & fortitudine quadam mascula virilique natura hoc agunt [...]. Huius evidens argumentum est, quod cum adoleverint, soli ad civilem administrationem conversi viri praestantes evadunt [...]."

⁹Waterfield in: Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Waterfield, XV-VI.; Halperin, "Why is Diotima a Woman?" *passim*.

form of intercourse (and only with procreative intentions),¹⁰ on the other hand, is parodied in Aristophanes' speech.

Renaissance readers had to domesticate the text if they wanted to continue to study Plato or to use his texts as a support for their own ideas: how could they assimilate such passages into their own cultural background without discrediting Plato forever, let alone endorse him as the most Christian of all pagan philosophers? In fact, even for modern readers it has been notoriously difficult to assess the tone of Aristophanes' speech, or even to give a consistent and convincing interpretation of the story: is it intended as mere parody, or more of an Aesopian fable, and if so, what sort of morals are to be construed from the narration? To what extent are genuine Platonic concepts about Eros embedded in the narration? What are we to think of the idea that sexuality is inborn and hereditary?¹¹ It is, of course, far beyond the scope of this article to treat these issues. One aspect of the Aristophanes myth that was as attractive as it was mysterious to Renaissance and modern readers alike, is the idea that sexuality is actually a substitute, *ersatz*, for a primordial unity of some sort that has been lost for good, a kind of emotional sensation. According to Plato, lovers "obviously have some other objective, which their minds can't formulate; they only glimpse what it is and articulate it in vague terms" (192CD).¹² Here Eros becomes a signifier for the pursuit of lost primordial wholeness, which allows the matching halves to desire such close proximity that they would

¹⁰See, for example Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, VI, 14: 229-230; see also below.

¹¹See Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, IV: 384; Waterfield in Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Waterfield, XXIII-IV; Nehamas, *Virtues of Authenticity*, 307, provides a good example of a contemporary assessment of this text: "Aristophanes' speech is stunning in its originality. Although it contains parody in its use of myth, it is on the whole a highly serious work, and its view of love has no parallel in earlier Greek literature. It actually anticipates more romantic versions of love, particularly the idea that love draws together two unique individuals to join as one person. For all its comic elements, a sad note sounds frequently in the speech: the goal of loving, the forging of one person out of two, is not to be achieved. What we have instead is the temporary satisfaction of sexual relationships, and these are at best a promise of a more permanent happiness and a closer union."

¹²Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Waterfield, 28-9; Plato, *Opera omnia*, 1602, 1187B: "Aliud quiddam est profecto, quod animus utriusque cupit, nec exprimere valet, sed vaticinatur potius coniunctique, et affectum insitum vestigiis signat obscuris." See also Halperin, "Platonic *Erôs*," 67-69.

even gladly let Hephaestus,¹³ the divine blacksmith, bind and fasten them together for eternity. This longing cannot be induced by sex or physical attraction alone, but only by some sort of desire for an ontologically higher unity (192DE).

On the other hand, such noble and high-flying ideas in the truest sense of the word are counterbalanced by the satirical mood characteristic of Aristophanes' tale: quite humorous (to modern readers, at least) is, for instance, the divine threat to the halved humans that if they continue to misbehave they would be divided once more, "and in that mode of existence we'd be no different from those profiles on tombstone, sawn in two down the line of our noses" (193A).¹⁴ To Marsilio Ficino, this threat would be an integral part of the divine mysteries hidden behind the profane text.

Marsilio Ficino's Psychological Reading

Marsilio Ficino, the first translator of the complete works of Plato into Latin (published 1484), was a key figure in the transmission of Platonism to the Latin west after the Middle Ages. In addition, Ficino wrote sometimes lengthy commentaries or introductions to Plato's works, in which his key objective was to endorse Plato as a sort of Attic Moses who wrote in Greek and formed part of a larger group of *prisci theologi* (ancient theologians) whose doctrines could be interpreted as forebears of the truths of Christian doctrine.¹⁵ Ficino's translation of Plato was influential until the nineteenth-century and is faithful to the text.¹⁶ The following discussion will focus on Ficino's commentary on the *Symposium*, the *Commentarium in convivium Platonis, De amore*, one of his most successful works, where the Author tries to cover up the difficult passages of the myth of Aristophanes.¹⁷

The fourth book of the *De amore* is devoted to Aristophanes' speech. From the very beginning Ficino emphasizes the difficulty and alleged obscurity of this passage, which calls for special interpretative methods to

¹³This is, of course, an ironic allusion to the way in which Hephaestus welded his unfaithful wife Aphrodite together with her lover Ares in a hunting net to expose the adulterous couple to the derision of the gods (*Odyssey* 8, 266-367).

¹⁴Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Waterfield, 29; Plato, *Opera omnia*, 1602, 1187D: "[...] talesque efficiamur, quales qui in columnis figurantur, nares secti evadamus similes [...]."

¹⁵Copenhaver/Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 155; Allen, "Ficino's Theory," *passim*.

¹⁶For a positive assessment of the quality of Ficino's translations, see Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*, 1:311-313.

¹⁷See Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*, 2:484 on editions and dates of composition for this work.

read the story of the primordial humans. Unlike his commentaries on the other speeches of the *Symposium*, in this case Ficino retells the myth in its entirety. This allows him to omit some of the most unassimilable passages: the encomium of homosexual men, and Zeus moving the sexual organs of the halved humans to their front side. Only a half sentence alludes to divergent sexual orientations: “Everyone therefore is looking for his other half, no matter to which sex he feels attracted, and gets very excited when he meets it [...].”¹⁸

Ficino then takes another step which provides him with a theoretical basis to domesticate the pagan text in its entirety: referring to the authority of Augustine, he claims that it is indispensable to read the myth as an allegory in order to discover the divine mysteries that lie under the veil of the figments of the text.¹⁹ In that process it is possible to avoid interpreting *all* the items reported in the story, because many details are introduced only to allow for the ordering and the connection of disparate and difficult, and hence divine, truths. Even obscenity may turn out to be a safeguard against profanation. In that context, Ficino links allegorical reading metaphorically to a tool, the iron part of the plough used to turn the earth and, therefore, the essential element to which other (non-essential) parts are added.

For it was the custom of the ancient theologians to conceal their holy and pure mysteries in the shadows of metaphors, lest they be defiled by the profane and impure. [...] For even Aurelius Augustine says that not all the things that are represented in figures must be thought to mean something. For many things are added for the sake of order and connection, on account of the parts that do mean something. Only by the ploughshare is the earth turned, but in order that this can be done, other parts too are joined to the plough.²⁰

¹⁸ Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 2:167-168: “Quotiens itaque dimidium suum alicui cuiuscumque sexus avidus sit occurrit, vehementissime concitatur [...]” (*Symposium* 191A).

¹⁹ On Ficino and allegorical reading, see, for instance, Copenhaver/Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, 155-6; Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*, 1:343-347.

²⁰ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 72-73; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 2:169: “Mos enim erat veterum theologorum sacra ipsorum puraque arcana, ne a prophaniis et impuris polluerentur, figurarum umbraculis tegere. [...] Nam et Aurelius Augustinus non omnia inquit, que in figuris funguntur, significare aliquid putanda sunt. Multa enim propter illa que significant ordinis et connexionis gratia sunt adjuncta. Solo vomere terra proscinditur sed, ut hoc fieri possit, cetera quoque huic aratri membra iunguntur.”

But allegorical exegesis is not the sole strategy for avoiding some of the more difficult passages in Aristophanes' speech. Ficino also makes the reader believe that his own synopsis of the myth is actually the genuine and complete Platonic text on which he subsequently comments *verbatim*.

Men formerly had three sexes: masculine, feminine, and mixed, the sons of the sun, the earth, and the moon. And they were whole. But on account of pride, when they wished to equal God, they were cut in two; if they are proud again, they are to be split in two parts again. The division having been made, half is drawn to half by love, in order that the restitution of wholeness may be effected. This achieved, the race of men will be blessed.²¹

This stratagem, not uncommon in Ficino's allegorical interpretations, allows for a reading of the physical details of Aristophanes speech as allegories for the fate of the human soul:²²

*Men, that is, the souls of men, formerly, that is, when they are created by God, are whole, they are provided with two lights, one innate and the other infused, in order that by the innate light they may perceive inferior or equal things, and by the infused, superior things. They wished to equal God. They turned themselves toward the innate light alone. Hence they were divided. They lost the infused splendor when they were turned toward the innate light alone, and they fell immediately into bodies. If they become more proud, they will be divided again, that is, if they trust too much to the natural power, that innate and natural light which remains will be extinguished in some measure.*²³

²¹Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 73; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 2:168-169: "Homines quondam tres sexus habebant, masculinum, femininum, promiscuum, solis, terrae, lunaeque filios. Erant et integri. Sed propter superbiam, cum deo equare se vellent, scissi in duo sunt, iterum si superbiant, bifariam discindendi. Sectione facta, dimidium amore ad dimidium trahitur, ut integratatis restitutio fiat. Qua completa, beatum genus hominum est futurum."

²²Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*, 1:355 says accordingly: "[...] when Plato seems to be praising something we abhor, he is in fact praising a purified and heavenly form of it which we, with our earthly vision, are not able to see."

²³Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 73; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 2:169: "Homines, id est, hominum animae. Quondam, id est, quando a deo creatur. Integrae sunt, duobus sunt exornate luminibus, ingenito et infuso. Ut ingenito equalia est inferiora, infuso superiora conspicerent. Deo equare se voluerunt. Ad unicum lumen ingenitum se reflexerunt. Hinc divide sunt. Splendorem infusum amiserunt, quando ad solum ingenitum sunt converse sta-

According to Ficino, Aristophanes' myth is an allegory for a condition of the soul and points to a mental process. The split of the primordial humans signifies the loss of the divine ray of light, the supernatural intellect. Equipped solely with their other half, natural reason, humans are confronted with the task of regaining their connection with the numinous. In these circumstances, Aristophanes's speech becomes an allegory for the soul's descent into matter and its subsequent regaining of the beatific vision through ascent to the divine. The way back, upwards, so to say, is powered by Eros. (Here Ficino's reading of Aristophanes' tale refers to the divine cavalcade in Plato's *Phaedrus*, a central myth for Ficino's theory of love.)²⁴

The division having been made, half is drawn to half by love. When souls, already divided and immersed in bodies, first have come to the years of adolescence, they are aroused by the natural and innate light which they retained (as if by a certain half of themselves) to recover, through the study of truth, that infused and divine light, once half of themselves, which they lost in falling. This once recovered, they will be whole and blessed with a vision of God.²⁵

The main thrust of Ficino's reading rests on the claim that the myth of the double humans does not refer to the entire physical human being, but rather exclusively to soul, which in the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being is clearly superior to bodies. "When Aristophanes said *men*, he meant our souls, in the Platonic way."²⁶ This reading has important consequences for Ficino's philosophical anthropology. Severing bodies from souls, Ficino's

timque in corpora cecidere. *Superbiores facte iterum dividentur*, id est, si naturali nimium confidant ingenio, lumen illud ingenitum et naturale quod restitit quodammodo extinguetur." For an interesting parallel in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola see his *Commento sopra una canzona de amore* II. 4: 527-529, together with Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, 200-202.

²⁴Allen, *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino*, 88-111, esp. 105, 111, 166. On the interpretation of the myth of the divine cavalcade see also Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, 7. 14: 259-260.

²⁵Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 73; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 2:169: "Sectione facta, dimidium amore ad dimidium trahitur. Animae iam divisae et immersae corporibus, cum primum ad annos adolescentiae venerint, naturali et ingenito lumine quod servarunt, ceu sui quodam dimidio excitantur ad infusum illud divinumque lumen olim ipsarum dimidium, quod cadentes amisere, studio veritatis recipiendum. Quo recepto iam integræ erunt et dei visionæ beatæ."

²⁶Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 75; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 3:171: "[...] cum homines Aristophanes nominavit, more platonico animas nostras significavisse."

sweeping and, even for him, rather unusual claim that Aristophanes' myth refers exclusively to souls lends his anthropology an almost Cartesian tendency.

Hence, Man is said to procreate, nourish, grow, run, stand, sit, speak, make works of art, feel and understand. But all these things the soul itself does. And for this reason the soul will be Man. [...] the soul, as father and creator of the body, begets, feeds, and nourishes.²⁷

He maintains that the soul is the essence of the human being, whereas the body becomes a mere (and thus) dispensable attachment, generated by soul itself. In that case, the author argues, the content of Aristophanes' myth could not refer to bodies; instead of physiology, the story is about psychology. In this reading, the soul instrumentalizes the body in its entirety, an interpretation which is in blatant contradiction to Aristophanes' description of erotic physical desire leading towards the spiritual realm and thus reuniting the torn soul. Moreover, and as a corollary, according to Ficino the drama of the splitting in half of the primordial humans signifies the descent of soul into the physical world: here the lower part of the soul thinks of itself as sovereign, which only the creator himself can be, and hence is punished by loosing its higher light. This is the meaning of the revolt of the primordial beings against the Olympians in Aristophanes' speech.

But our soul fell into the body when, neglecting the divine light, it used its own light alone and began to be content with itself. Only God, to whom nothing is lacking, above whom there is nothing, remains content with Himself, sufficient to Himself. Therefore the soul made itself equal to God when it wished to be content with itself alone, as if it could be sufficient to itself no less than God.

Aristophanes says that this pride was clearly the cause of the soul, which was born whole, being *split*, that is, with regard to its twin lights; after this it used one but neglected the other. Plunged into the abyss of the body as though into the river Lethe, and forgetting itself for a time, it is seized by the senses and lust, as though by police and a tyrant. But when the body has matured, and the instruments of the senses have been purged, with learning contributing, the soul wakes up a little. Here the

²⁷ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 74; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 3: 170-171: "Hinc generare, nutrire, augere, currere, stare, sedere, loqui, artis opera fabricare, sentire, intelligere homo asseritur. Omnia vero haec anima ipsa facit. Ideoque anima erit homo. [...] anima tamquam pater et artifex corporis ipsum gignit, auget atque nutrit. »

natural light shines forth and searches out the order of natural things. By this investigation the soul perceives that there is some architect of this huge machine. And it desires to see and possess Him, [...]. But this institution and appetite is true love [...].²⁸

Aristophanes' narration explains why we feel erotic desire, a drive that is physical but nevertheless *transcends* the body, and hence underscores the intimate connection between bodies and souls. Ficino is unable to deal with this idea because in his conceptual framework there is no place for a positive assessment of physical desire, let alone for non-reproductive forms of sex as vehicles to discover the transcendent. In this interpretation of Aristophanes' myth, the body is excluded and discarded as an impediment to spiritual fulfillment from the beginning.

Ficino's reading is propelled by his urgent need to eradicate the pagan anthropology expressed in Plato's text. In that process Ficino transposes the splitting in half of the primordial humans from the level of the body, as in Aristophanes' narration, to a phenomenon relating to higher and lower parts of the soul. Ficino therefore translates the violence of the original separation of two bodies into a psychological process. An important corollary to this formulation is that the human being is now defined in terms of its soul, which entails a radical separation between bodies and minds. Such a clear division stands not only in sharp contradiction to contemporary Aristotelianisms,²⁹ but even to ideas Ficino himself expresses in other writings, where the emphasis is on a gradual transition from the bright intellectual forms to the darkness of matter, with soul in the centre of Creation.³⁰

The price of domesticating the pagan myth is high indeed: it amounts

²⁹On which, see for instance Käßler (2001).

³⁰For the author's doctrine of *spiritus*, more or less embodied garments of the soul, see Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*; Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 41-42 (introduction to the *De vita libri tres*) and *ibid.* III, 3: 256 : "Ipse [sc. *Spiritus*] vero est corpus tenuissimum, quasi non corpus et quasi iam anima, item quasi non anima et quasi iam corpus." See also *ibid.* III, 26: 384-385: [Mundus est] [...] non solum corporeus, sed vitae insuper et intelligentiae particeps. Quamobrem praeter corpus hoc mundi sensibus familiariter manifestum latente in eo *spiritus* corpus quoddam [...]. In spiritu viget anima; in anima fulget intelligentia. Atque sicut sub Luna nec miscetur aer cum terra, nisi per aquam, nec ignis cum aqua, nisi per aerem, sic in universo esca quaedam sive fomes ad animam corpori copulandum est ille ipse quem *spiritum* appellamus." Ficino, *Théologie platonicienne*, III, 137: "[...] anima [...] in medio mentium corporumque confinio creata est." *Ibid.* III: 153: "[...] anima verissimum omnium, quae a Deo componuntur, medium, [...] in ea, ut caetera praetermittant, part-

to nothing less than the complete substitution of Plato's anthropology by a construct which is seemingly more compatible with Ficino's own discursive formation. His reading emphasizes, even exaggerates, the difficulties that many Christian writers had in attempting to assess the position of the sexual body in Creation.

By linking the myth of the ascent of the soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Ficino's interpretation completely neglects the catch-line of Aristophanes' speech, namely that our longing to be united with our original halves will *never* be gratified, and that sex is just a pale imitation of our original unity. However, since Ficino cannot retell the myth in its full physical detail, he is consequently unable to adapt this line of thought, which might in fact have been very appealing to Christians. So, it is no wonder that the author assumes—in blatant contradiction to the original text—that Eros acts as a leveler of desire, who even has the ability to appease or fulfil all wishes. Hence, by confounding Eros with *philia*, Ficino identifies both terms with spiritual redemption.

Therefore by the beneficence of Love it is brought about that among the various degrees of bliss each is content with his own portion without any envy. It also happens that souls enjoy the same feasts eternally without any satiety. ... Therefore, to sum up briefly, we shall praise three benefits of Love: that by restoring us, formerly divided, to a whole, he leads us back to heaven; that he assigns each to his own seat, and makes all content in that distribution; that, all distaste removed, by a certain love of his own he perpetually kindles the pleasure as if new in the soul and renders it blessed with enticing and sweet fruition.³¹

ibile impartibili, alterum eodem, motus statu quasi actum gravi harmonice temperatur." A related phenomenon is to be found in Ficino's theory about the salutary powers of the color green, which he says is the mean between the two extremes black and white; Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, II, 14: 405. On the importance of the principle of mediation in Ficino in general, see Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, 101-102. On the principle of mediation in his magic and cosmology, see Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 41, with references.

³¹ Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 80; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 6: 177: "Quapropter amoris beneficio factum est ut in diversis felicitatis gradibus portione sua quilibet sine ulla invidia sit contentus. Fit etiam ut sine ulla sacietate animi iisdem vescantur dapibus in eternum. [...] Tria igitur ut brevi complectar amoris beneficia collaudabimus: quod nos olim divisos in integrum restituendo reducit in celum, quod suis quemque collocat sedibus facitque omnes in illa distributione quietos, quod omni expulso fastidio, suo quodam ardore oblectamentum quasi novum iugiter accedit in animo redditque illum blanda et dulci fruitione beatum."

This reading allows Ficino to eclipse all gendered aspects of the myth: it is not men, women, or androgynes, longing for each other's halves anymore; instead, all sorts of non-sexual (and hence, male) disembodied souls are desirous of immaterial divine virtues which enable them to regain divine unity on their way back to the godhead. As a consequence, Ficino aims at merely spiritual relationships between male souls, non-sexual friendships which, to a limited extent, reflect Aristophanes' encomium of homosexual men. Love for young men is engendered by an inborn or acquired desire for immortal and higher learning which is aptly directed toward male friends, simply because they are more intelligent than women. Again we see how Ficino's text, although seemingly far removed from the body and its physical aspects, nevertheless very stringently argues for a body politic that marginalizes women and reduces any relationship to them to the comparatively inferior level of the generation of offspring.

But some, either by nature or by education, are better fitted for progeny of the soul than of the body, and others, certainly the majority, the opposite. The former follow heavenly love, the latter, vulgar. For this reason the former naturally love males and certainly those already almost adult rather than women or boys, since in them sharpness of intellect flourishes more completely, which on account of its more excellent beauty, is most suitable for receiving the learning which they wish to procreate. The others the opposite, motivated by the pleasure of sexual intercourse, and the achievement of corporeal reproduction.³²

After what has been said, it is obvious that, although Ficino's reading displays a tendency to disembody humans, at the same time it establishes hierarchical relationships between men and women. The careful avoidance of physical aspects in Aristophanes' myth does not prevent Ficino from introducing a theoretical framework in which the bodies of women are inferior to those of men. This becomes obvious on the occasion of a remark by Aristophanes (made in passing) that male homosexuals, as descendants

³²Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 135; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, VI, 14: 229: "Ceterum alii vel propter naturam vel educationem ad animi fetus sunt quam corporis aptiores, alii, et quidem plurimi, contra. Illi celestem secuntur amorem, isti vulgarem. Illi natura iccirco mares et illos quidem iam pene adultos potius quam feminas aut pueros amant quoniam in eis magis admodum viget mentis acumen, quod ad disciplinam, quam illi generaturi sunt, propter excellentiorem sui pulchritudinem est aptissimum. Alii contra, propter congressus venerei voluptatem et generationis effectum."

of the sun, are especially brave.³³ Ficino claims that all three different kinds of primordial humans actually symbolically reflect divine virtues instilled by God into the soul: the male virtue of courage, which is akin to the sun, the female virtue of temperance, and the androgynous one of justice. In that context, Ficino establishes a hierarchy of the sexes, by stating that the male element is active, the androgynous active and passive, and the female element entirely passive. This is, of course, once again only very distantly related to the original text, where homosexual males were the best pairings while mixed ones belonged to adulterers; Aristophanes does not, however, have much to say about lesbian couples.

The Courage of men we call masculine because of its hardness and boldness. Temperance we call feminine because of a certain restrained and cooler habit of desire and its soft nature. Justice we call mixed. Feminine certainly inasmuch as because of its innocence it brings harm to no one. But masculine inasmuch as it does not permit harm to be done to others, and with very severe judgment levies punishments upon wicked men.

But because it is proper to the male to give and to the female to receive, for that reason we call the sun male, since it receives light from none and gives to all. The moon giving and receiving –receiving from the sun it gives to the elements—we call mixed. And the earth, since it certainly receives from all and gives to none, we call female.³⁴

It is rather amusing to learn that the female, procreative element in this account “gives” to none; this seems to be so extravagant an idea that it can be read only as an unintentional allusion to the lesbians in Aristophanes’ myth.

³³The celestial origin of the different sorts of primordial human beings fitted well into the more general theory that love between individuals was actually engendered by analogous celestial origin and was hence due to cosmic causes: see Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 5: 174.

³⁴Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 77-78; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, IV, 5: 174 : “Fortitudinem hominum masculam propter rubor et audaciam nuncupamus. Temperantiam, feminam, propter remissum quemdam et frigidorem desiderii habitum miteque ingenium. Iustitiam, promiscuam. Feminam quidem prout innocentia sua iniuriam infert nemini. Masculam vero prout aliis inferri non sinit et severiori censura in homines iniquos animadvertis. Quia vero maris dare, feminae suspicere proprium est, iccirco solem qui lumen a nullo accipiens exhibet omnibus, marem vocamus. Lunam, quae accipiens a sole, dat elementis, a dando et accipiendo, promiscuam. Terram, cum accipiat quidem ab omnibus, tributa nulli, feminam nuncupamus.” For a parallel passage in Pico della Mirandola, see Pico, *De hominis dignitate*, 530.

It is only in the sixth book of his commentary on the *Symposium* (that is, in a place far removed from Aristophanes speech), that Ficino speaks about physical love between men—and only to reject it as an entirely bestial waste of sperm, a crime equivalent to murder.

But since the reproductive drive of the soul, being without cognition, makes no distinction between the sexes, nevertheless, it is naturally aroused for copulation whenever we judge any body to be beautiful; and it often happens that those who associate with males, in order to satisfy the demands of the genital part, copulate with them. [...] But it should have been noticed that the purpose of erections of the genital part is not the useless act of ejaculation, but the function of fertilizing and procreating; the part should have been redirected from males to females. We think that it was by some error of this kind that that wicked crime arose which Plato in his *Laws* roundly curses as a form of murder.³⁵

Ficino's determined rejection of the pagan anthropology outlined in Aristophanes' speech caused him to re-write the entire story. His opposition to the physical forms of same-sex love may well be related to a broader sociological context of fifteenth-century Florence. According to a recent study, the number of individuals in Florence involved in homosexual activities must have been considerable.³⁶ Given the implicit misogyny of Ficino's anthropology, it comes as no surprise that he considers virile women to be the most attractive.³⁷

³⁵Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 135; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, VI, 14: 229-230: "Quoniam vero genitalis illa vis animae, utpote cognitionis expers, sexu[u]m nullum habet discrimen, natura tamen sua totiens incitatur ad generandum, quotiens formosum, corpus aliquod iudicamus, contingit plerumque ut qui cum masculis conversantur, quo genitalis partis stimulus sedent illis se misceant. [...] Opportebat autem animadvertere partis illius incitamenta non irritum hoc iacture opus, sed serendi et procreandi officium affectare atque a masculis ad feminas eam traducere. Huiusmodi quodam errore nepharium scelus illud exortum putamus quod in *Legibus* suis Plato tamquam homicidii spetiem acerime detestatur."

³⁶Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 175, estimates that of up to one-third of the fifteenth-century Florentine male population was accused of sodomy. He writes (125): "As an accusation from 1512 suggests, Florentines found nothing at all unusual in the fact that men might desire and have sexual intercourse with both boys and women."

³⁷In that context it is interesting to note that in the early sixteenth-century prostitutes in Venice and Florence cut their hair to attract more customers; Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution*, 133.

Women, of course, catch men easily, and even more easily women who display a certain masculine character. Men catch men still more easily, since they are more like men than women are, and they have blood and spirit which is clearer, warmer, and thinner, which is the basis of erotic entrapment.³⁸

On the other hand, and in pointed contrast to Leone Ebreo, whom we will consider next, Ficino is able to open a philosophical perspective on a type of sublimated sexuality that is expressed in intellectual friendships between men.³⁹

Leone Ebreo, Plato, Moses and the Book of Genesis

The *Dialoghi d'amore*, a very popular work during the sixteenth-century, probably written around 1512 but published only in 1535, opens an entirely new perspective on Aristophanes' speech.⁴⁰ Its author, Leone Ebreo (Judah Abravanel), was a Jewish philosopher and physician who in 1492 emigrated from the Iberian peninsula to Italy. The *Dialoghi* is remarkable insofar as it seems to be the first work written by a Jew that extensively refers to Greek mythology. Leone was reacting to Ficino's attempt to portray Plato as one of the prophets of Christianity. As with Ficino before him, for Leone Ebreo, too, Aristophanes' speech served as a pretext for a discussion of his own anthropology. Leone, too, omits important parts of the story, though he recounts Aristophanes' speech in greater detail than his Christian predecessor. This is especially true of the physical details of the primordial humans: in the *Dialoghi*, one finds a description of the double genitals, the progeny of the male and female halves from sun and earth respectively, and the relationship of the mixed parts to the moon. Leone also reports that the gods refrained from killing the rebellious creatures for fear that no one would worship them anymore, and the subsequent mov-

³⁸Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 165; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, VII, 9: 253: "Feminae profecto viros facile capiunt, facilius autem ille quae masculam quandam indolem prae se ferunt. Et tanto facilius masculi quanto similiores sunt viris quam feminae et sanguinem spiritumque habent lucidorem, calidorem, subtiliorem, qua in re amatoria consistit illaqueatio."

³⁹On this kind of friendship, which became famous as "Platonic Love," see Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, II, 8-9; Nelson, *Renaissance Theory of Love*, 75; Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy*, 195-196; Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*, 1:355; Ebbersmeyer, *Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft*, Kodera, *Filone und Sofia* and "Masculine/Feminine."

⁴⁰On the date of the composition of the *Dialoghi*, see Garvin, *The Language of Leone Ebreo's Dialoghi d'amore*, 207-210. On the *Dialoghi* in general, see Perry, "Dialogue and Doctrine"; Perry, *Erotic Spirituality*; Peri, *Die Idee der Liebe*.

ing of their genitals by Zeus in order to avoid the waste of sperm when ejaculate fell on the earth. At this point in the *Dialoghi*, there is an interpolation which states that out of the semen grew the mandrake, a plant notorious for its connections with magic.⁴¹ One gets the impression that the Jewish physician was deeply intrigued by Plato's description of surgery to separate Siamese twins. (Ficino, who was also a physician, seems by contrast to have been much less enthusiastic about the anatomic details in Aristophanes' account.)

Swollen with pride at their own strength, they dared to give battle to the gods, to do them hurt and injury. Jupiter, therefore, taking counsel with the other gods, after much deliberation decided that the androgynes should not be destroyed, for in the absence of the human race there would be none to pay honor to the gods; nor yet should their arrogance be left unrebuked, because tolerance would bring insult upon the gods. Therefore he determined to divide them in twain, and he sent Apollo to cut them in half lengthwise and to make of one two, so that they could only walk upright on two feet; and in this way the number of divine worshippers would be doubled. Moreover, Apollo was to warn the androgynes that if they sinned further against the gods, he would return and divide each half into two. And they would be left with one eye and one ear, half a head and face, one hand and one foot, on which they would have to hop along as if lame, and thus would be like figures sculptured on columns in *basso-rilievo*. Apollo then cut the androgynes in half through the breast and the belly, and turned the faces round towards the side which was cut so that, seeing the incision, man might be reminded of his evil ways and the better observe the section cut off from himself. Over the breast-bone he placed skin, and drew together all parts of the skin which had been cut over the belly and tied them together at the center, and this knot is called the navel. And he left a few wrinkles round it made by the scars of incision, that seeing them man might remember his sin and punishment. When each part saw that it lacked the other it became desirous of reintegration, and the two came together and were united in close embrace; and thus they stayed, taking neither food nor drink until they perished. For their parts of generation were behind, facing the same way as their shoulders, which before had been the front of

⁴¹On the mandrake and its uses in magic, notably as a love-potion, see, for example, Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Abergläubens*, I: 318 (*sub voce* "Alraun"), who reports the belief that this plant grows out of the sperm of hanged men. It could be important for the textual history of the *Dialoghi* to find a source for this interpolation, because the original speaks of cicadas and Ficino's translation accordingly reads: "[...] sed in terram spargentes semina cicadarum instar concepiebant, atque generabant." Plato, *Opera omnia*, 1602, 1186 C.

man, so that they cast their sperm upon the ground, where it bred mandrakes. Jupiter, therefore, seeing that the human race was completely dying out, sent Apollo to turn their genitals to the front of the belly, so that in mutual embrace they might beget their own kind and be satisfied and return to seek what is needful for the preservation of life.⁴²

In contrast to Ficino's reading, Leone's account of Aristophanes' speech does not suppress the physical content of the myth: sexual intercourse is indispensable for a normal and happy life, hence sex is valuable and, as we shall see, it is the (partial) remedy for division created through original sin. Also in contrast to Ficino, this reading of the Platonic myth allows Leone to repeat Plato's original idea that physical desire is a longing for integration or for a sort of primordial unity.

⁴²Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 343-344; Leone Ebreo *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 81v-82r: “Insuperbito delle forze sue, prese audacia di contendere con gli Dei, & d'esserli contrario e molesto, onde Giove consigliandosi sopra ciò con gl'altri Dei, poi diverse sententie gli parve non doverli ruinare, per che mancando il genere humano, non saria chi honorasse gli dei, ne manco gli parve di lasciarli in la sua arrogantia, perche tollerarla sarebbe vituperio alli divini, onde determinò che si dividissero, et mandò Apolline che gli dividesse per mezo a lungo, & ne facesse di uno due, perche potessino solamente andare dritti per una banda sopra due piedi, & saria doppio il numero de li divini cultori, ammonendogli che se piu peccassero contra gli dei, che tornaria à dividere ogni mezo in due, & restariano con uno ochio, & una orecchia, meza testa & viso, con una mano, & un' piè, col quale caminariano saltando come li zoppi, et restarebbero come gl'huomini dipinti ne le colonne à mezo viso. Il quale Apolline in questo modo li divise, dalla parte del petto, & del ventre, & voltogli il viso alla parte tagliata, acciò che vedendo l'incisione si ricordassero del suo errore, & ancora perche potessero meglio guardare la parte tagliata, & offesa, sopra l'osso del petto misse cuoio, & pigliò tutte le bande tagliate del ventre, & le raccolse insieme, legolle in mezo di quello, il quale ligame si chiama ombelico, circa del quale lasciò alcune rughe fatte dalle cicatrici de l'incisione, acciò che vedendole l'huomo si ricordasse del peccato, & de la pena. Vedendo ciascuno de li mezi mancare del suo resto desiderando reintegrarse s'approssimava a l'altro suo mezo & abbracciandosi s'univano strettamente, & senza mangiare ne bere, si stavano così fin'che perivano. Erano i genitali loro alla parte posteriore de le spalle, che prima era anteriore, onde gittando il sperma fuora cadeva in terra, e generava mandagore. Vedendo adunque Giove che il genere humano totalmente periva, mandò Apolline che gli tornasse [i] genitali a la parte anteriore del ventre, mediante li quali uniendosi generavano suo simile, restando satisfatti cercavano le cose necessarie a la conservazione de la vita.” [Here and elsewhere for this text, I retain the orthography used in the *editio princeps* of 1535, even though in places it is somewhat unusual.]

From that time forth, love, which heals man's wounds and restores the unity of his primeval nature, was engendered amongst men; and by its restoration of two into one it is the remedy of the sin which led to one being made into two. Love in every man is, therefore, male and female, for each of them is but a half and not a whole man, and therefore desires to be made whole in its other half.⁴³

Significantly, physical attraction is strictly confined to the perspective of intercourse between men and women, whereas other kinds of sexual orientations are not mentioned.

Hence, in what is characteristic for his cultural and intellectual background, Leone Ebreo describes the primordial humans as exclusively heterosexual pairs, thereby (and even more unambiguously than Ficino) eclipsing any reference to the homosexual or lesbian pairings in Aristophanes' original account. The strategy of avoiding the difficult parts of the speech is simple: according to Leone's reading, the primordial human being was androgynous—male and female—and seems to have existed *apart* from “single” men and women as we know them.

In the *Symposium*, in the name of Aristophanes, Plato declares that the beginning of love was on this wise. At the beginning of all things, the human race embraced a third species which was not mere man or woman, but was called androgynous, being at once both male and female.

And as man derives from the sun and woman from the earth, so that kind derived from the moon, which is made up of the sun and earth. An androgyne was thus great, mighty and terrible, having two human bodies joined together at the breast, and two heads on one neck with two faces [...].⁴⁴

⁴³ Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 344-5; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 82r: “Da questo tempo in qua fu generato l'amor' fra gli huomini reconciliatore, e reintegatore de l'antica natura, e quello che torna à fare di due uno remedio del peccato, che fece quando de l'uno fu fatto due, è adunque l'amor' in ciascuno de gl'huomini maschio, & femmina, però che ogn'uno di loro è mezo huomo & non huomo intero, onde ogni mezo desia la reintegrazione sua con l'altro mezo, [...].”

⁴⁴ Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 343; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 81r: “[...] Platone [...] dice nel convivio in nome d'Aristofane, che l'origine del' amore fu in questo modo, che essendo nel principio de gli huomini un'altro terzo genere di huomini, cioè non solamente huomini, & non solamente donne, ma quello che chiamavano Androgeno, il quale era maschio e femmina insieme [...].” Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 343; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 81 r-v: “[...] e così come l'huomo depende dal Sole, e la donna da la terra, così quello dependeva da la Luna partecipante di Sole, e di Terra, era adunque

Leone's interpretation, however, does not stop here. According to him, the male and female halves of the primordial being refer to intelligence and body respectively. As will soon become clear, Aristophanes' original tale of double humans is discreetly replaced by an account of androgynous unity, containing male and female aspects alike. Hence, while Plato's original story referred to the relationship between bodies, in the perspective of the *Dialoghi* Aristophanes' speech explains how intellect and body are related to each other; they are actually matching, or in need of harmonization, which is again in strong contradistinction to Ficino's Christian reading, where the soul is imprisoned or exiled in the body, at least to a certain degree. What is at stake here is the model of a blissful separation of the soul from the body as opposed to the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of both principles. According to Leone Ebreo, sexual intercourse is a means of achieving unity between mind and body, because it was God's intention that the intellect and the body should take care of each other *jointly*.

[...] Plato says that from this division love was born, because each half desires and loves reintegration with its other half; in other words, the intellect would take no heed of the body save for the love which it bears its consort and female half, nor would the body be governed by the intellect were it not for the love and affection which it bears for its husband and masculine half. Moreover, the story tells us that even when the two halves came together in love they did not seek those things which were necessary for their sustenance, and they perished; wherefore the god Jupiter caused their members of generation to be turned facing each other, and so they remained satisfied and in union and in procreation of their kind their division was healed.⁴⁵

In a characteristic move, Leone exploits and at the same time significantly alters or subverts the language of traditional Hellenistic as well as

quello Androgeno grande, forte, e terribile, però che haveva due corpi humani legati ne la parte del petto, e due teste colligate nel collo, un' viso à una parte de le spalle e l'altro a l'altra [...].”

⁴⁵ Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 363; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 93r: “[...] dice [Platone] che da questa divisione nacque l'amore, però che ogni mezo desia & ama la reintegrazione del suo mezo restante, cioè che in effetto l'intelletto non haveria mai cura del corpo, se non fusse per l'amore che ha al suo consorte mezo corporeo femminino, ne il corpo si governaria per l'intelletto se non per l'amore & affettione che ha al suo consorte & mezo maschilino, & in quello che dice unindosi l'un'mezo con l'altro, per l'amore non cercavano le cose necessarie per il sostentimento loro & perivano; onde per remedio Iuppiter li fece tornare li genitali de l'uno verso de l'altro, & satisfatti per il coito & generazione del simile si reintegrò la loro divisione, [...].”

Christian body-discourses: according to the Peripatetic tradition, it was female matter that loved male intellectual forms, but, as Aristotle points out, this affection was not reciprocal (*Physics* I, 9 192a 20). In Ficino's account, Aristophanes' tale was read as a purely psychological drama between the higher and lower parts of the soul, the body remaining completely left out. In Leone's *Dialoghi*, instead, the story relates to a reciprocal relationship between mind and body within a single human being. Like Ficino before him, Leone concludes by saying that his interpretation of Aristophanes' tale is exhaustive and that the rest of the Platonic story is merely ornament (hence, one may conclude that he was well aware that he had left out certain important details, that is, the part where Aristophanes states that heterosexual men and women descending from the mixed race of androgynes, produce the highest number of adulterers (191E).⁴⁷

This is the allegorical meaning of the Platonic myth, and the other details concerning the actual incision, the council of the gods and such like, are but ornaments of the story to make it more pleasing and lifelike in its form.⁴⁸

In what has been said so far, Leone's reading of Aristophanes' story differs from that of Ficino on several crucial issues: the positive assessment of heterosexual relationships, rather than its derision, as well as the appraisal of the mutual love between intellect and body, which in order to be saved should strive for union rather than for separation. In that context, Leone claims the textual authority of the Jewish tradition by maintaining that Plato is in fact repeating a key story from Genesis and that the philosopher presents Moses' words in the loquacious and disorderly way characteristic of the Greeks.⁴⁹

⁴⁶In a similar vein, Ficino had regarded the body as a well designed trap to lure souls down from heaven and trap them.

⁴⁷Plato, *Opera omnia*, 1602, 1186 D: "[...] quamobrem quicumque ex viris promiscui generis portio sunt, quod olim androgynum vocabatur, ex his reperiuntur, Ex hoc sane genere moechi ducunt originem."

⁴⁸Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 364; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 93 v: "Questo è quello che significa la favola Platonica allegoricamente, & l'altre particolarità che scrive nel modo del dividere, e del consultare & simili sonno ornamenti de la favola, per farla piu bella & verisimile."

⁴⁹The ornate Greek style was censured in many of the Latin textbooks of rhetoric which were formative for many Renaissance humanists. See, for instance, Cicero, *De oratore* II, 17-20, and I, 102: "[...] tamquam alicui graeculo otioso et loquaci et fortasse docto atque eruditio quaestiunculam, de qua meo arbitrio loquar [...]."

Moses did not tell the story so plainly, nor in such detail, but the substance of the story he told briefly; it was from him that Plato took his myth, amplifying and polishing it after the manner of Greek oratory, thus giving a new and confused account of the Hebrew version.⁵⁰

This stratagem allows Leone to wrestle with the authority of the Greek as well as the Christian tradition: What follows is a (talmudic) reading of *Genesis* 1, 26-27.⁵¹ In the ensuing comparison of Aristophanes to the biblical text (but also in many other instances), Leone stresses that even God has male and female aspects, and that Adam, the first man, was created in his likeness, male and female, that is, androgynous, an idea that is repeated several times in the *Dialoghi*.

God created Adam (that is man) in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.)

This is the book of the generation of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam (that is man), in the day when they were created.

The first man, and indeed every other human being in the whole wide world, is made, as Scripture testifies, in the image and likeness of God, both male and female at once.⁵²

The idea that the primordial human was androgynous allows Leone to maintain that the separation of the double humans in the Platonic story actually refers to the creation of Eve in Genesis, from Adam's side, and not merely from his rib.

⁵⁰Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 345; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 82v: "Non l' ha già favoleggiata [Moise] con questa particolarità e chiarezza, ma ha posta la substantia de la favola sotto brevità, e Platone la prese da lui, & l'ampiò, & ornò secondo l'oratoria grecale, facendo in questo una mescolanza inordinata de le cose hebraic[h]e."

⁵¹See also Yavneh, "The Spiritual Eroticism," 88, for a reference to the *Zohar*.

⁵²Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 346; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 82v: "Creo Dio Adam cioè l'huomo in sua forma, in forma di Dio, creò esso maschio e femmina, creo essi [...]." Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 346-7; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 83r-v: "Questo è il libro de la generatione di Adam nel di che Dio creò l'huomo in somiglianza di Dio, fece esso maschio e femmina, gli creò & gli benedisse, & chiamò il nome loro Adam, cioè huomo nel di che furono creati." Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 354; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 87v: "PHI: Il primo huomo, & ogn' altro huomo di quanti ne vedi è fatto come dice la scrittura, a immagine, & similitudine di Dio, maschio e femmina."

[...] taking one of Adam's ribs from him in sleep. The woman, therefore, was not made in the beginning, as was first said. Again, at the end of the narrative, speaking of the offspring of Adam (as you have seen), we read that God created man in the likeness of God, male and female created He them, and He called their name Adam in the day that they were created. It would appear, therefore, that there was at once both male and female at the beginning of the Creation, and that (the woman) was not made subsequently by the withdrawal of the side or rib as is narrated.)

[...] took one of his sides, the word in Hebrew being equivalent to rib, but here and elsewhere it stands for side, that is, the side or feminine person [...].⁵³

The contradiction in the sacred text—Moses first speaks of Adam in the singular and then in the plural—encourages the thoughtful reader to realize that divine mysteries are hidden in the text.

[...] it is inconceivable that the divine Moses should contradict himself so obviously as to seem deliberately. Hence it is credible that he wished to infer a hidden mystery beneath these obvious discrepancies.⁵⁴

The evidence that primordial man was androgynous is further substantiated by the Hebraic commentary traditions:

[Moses] wants to say that Adam, that is the first man, whom God created on the sixth day of the Creation, being a human individual, combined in himself male and female without division; and therefore the text says that God created Adam in his Own likeness, [...]. Wherefore the ancient Hebrew commentators in their Chaldean commentary here say, 'Adam was created of two persons, the one part male the other female.'⁵⁵

⁵³Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 347; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 83v: “[...] fece dormendo [...] Adam] d'uno dei suoi lati, non era adunque fatta nel principio come havea detto ancora nel fine volendo narrare la progenie di Adam dice (come hai veduto) che Dio gli creò in somiglianza di Dio maschio, e femmina, creò quegli, & chiamo il nome loro Adam, nel di che furono creati; Adunque pare che nel principio de la creatione sua di continente fussero maschio, & femmina, & non di poi per sottrazione del lato, o costa, come ha detto [...].” Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 349; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 85 r: “[...] pigliò uno de li suoi lati, il quale in hebraico è vocabolo equivo-co a costella, ma qui et in altre parti ancora sta per lato, cioè il lato, o persona femminile [...].”

⁵⁴Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 348; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 84r: “[...] non è da credere ch'el Santo Moïse si contradica così manifestamente che par'che egli procuri contradirsi. Onde è da credere che vogli inferire qualche occulto misterio sotto la manifesta contradictione.”

⁵⁵Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 348-9; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 84v: “Vuol dire che Adam cioè huomo primo, il qual Dio creò nel di sesto de la

By referring rather casually to linguistic details that were difficult for non-Jews to grasp, as well as to a body of commentaries inaccessible to Christians, Leone establishes Mosaic authority over the biblical text and over the Platonic tradition. No wonder he has Sofia saying approvingly: "It is indeed pleasing to learn that Plato drank of the waters of the sacred font."⁵⁶ This appropriation of Aristophanes' myth in the *Dialoghi* has an important consequence: in contrast to Ficino, for whom Diotima's speech was of key importance while the story of the double humans was somewhat secondary, Leone emphasizes its fundamental role in the understanding of what humans are because it outlines the entire story of the human race.

All these things the first man really suffered in his body; and they are symbolic of the life and works of every man, his ultimate happiness, the demands of his corporeal nature, and the consequences of excessive sin together with its punishment and the possibility of eventual salvation. If you look into the story, you will behold as in a mirror the life of every man with his good and his evil, and you will recognize the way which must be shunned and the way which must be followed to attain to eternal happiness where there is no death.⁵⁷

Consequently, Aristophanes' myth serves Leone as a pretext to develop a type of anthropology that reflects his Jewish background. The androgynous primordial human, Adam, was a harmonious unity of body and mind who did not feel any inclination to sin. Thus, Leone concludes that the intentions of Plato and Moses were the same, even if their ways of telling the story were different. In Leone Ebreo's anthropology the original double humans are first reduced to a heterosexual pairing which then becomes related to a division in mind and body in the first human being.

creazione essendo un'supposto humano conteneva in se maschio, & femmina senza divisione, & però dice che Dio creò Adam ad immagine di Dio [...] però commentano qui li commentarij Hebraici antichi in lingua caldea dicendo, Adam di due persone fu creato d'una parte maschio, da l'altra femmina [...]."

⁵⁶Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 350; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 85v: "Mi piace vedere che Platone habbi bevuto de l'acqua del sacro fonte [...]."

⁵⁷Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 361-2; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 92r: "[...] le quali cose intervenne in effetto corporalmente al primo huomo, denotano (secondo l'allegorico) le vite, & successi di ciascuno de gl'huomini; Qual' sia il fine loro beato, ciò che richiede la necessità de l'humanità, & il successo del eccessivo peccato, & la pena de l'accidente di quello, con l'ultima possibilità del remedio, se ben'l intenderai in uno specchio vedrai la vita di tutti gl'huomini, il loro bene & male, conoscerai la via che si debbe fuggire, & quella che si debbe seguire per venire a eterna beatitudine senza mai morire."

Notably, Plato does not speak of a hermaphrodite, but rather of double humans: “[...] man and woman, [...] come together again as one body and individual in marriage and sexual intercourse.”⁵⁸ Contrary to Ficino’s position, sexual intercourse and procreation are a *remedy* for sin: it is a sacred union that is performed by humans to regain temporarily their divine unity once again. According to Leone, to sin means to turn *away* from the body and neglect the duties that mind and body owe each other. (Moreover, after the Fall, sex is the only means to perpetuate the species.)

[...] generation, as Aristotle says, was a remedy for mortality. Therefore man, as long as immortal, did not procreate his kind; but when through sin he was made mortal, he came to his own aid by raising up his like, which power God had bestowed potentially upon him, so that by one means or another the human race should not perish.⁵⁹

By interpreting a quotation from Aristotle, Leone again discreetly subverts the original myth according to which sexuality is not viewed primarily as a means to create offspring but rather as an urge to reestablish a primordial unity (at least temporarily) in order to maintain one’s own psycho-physical equilibrium. As in Ficino, there is a connection between sin and separation; yet in the perspective of the *Dialoghi*, that nexus does not result in a division between higher and lower parts of the soul, but instead in the separation of male minds and female bodies in one and the same individual.

Sin is truly that which causes division in man and cuts his nature in twain, just as righteousness makes a man to be single and preserves the unity of his nature. Again, we can truly say that division in man produces sin, for in so far as he is single, he has no inclination to do evil nor to impair his union. Therefore since sin and division in man are almost the same thing, or at least two inseparable things, the one always implying the other, sin may be said to spring from division—according to the version of the Scriptures—and division from sin—according to Plato.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 350; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d’amore*, III, 85r: “[...] l’huomo e la donna si tornano à reintegrare nel matrimonio, & coito in uno medesimo supposto carnale, & individuale [...].”

⁵⁹Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 354; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d’amore*, III, 87v: “La generatione (come dice Aristotile) fu per remedio de la mortalità, & però l’huomo in quanto fu immortale non generò, quando già per il peccato fu fatto mortale si soccorse con la generatione del simile, alla quale Dio li diede potentia accioche o a un’modo, o a un’altro non perisca l’humana spetie.”

⁶⁰Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 351; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d’amore*, III, 85 v: “In effetto il peccato è quello che incide l’huomo e causa in lui divisione, così come la giusta drittezza il fa uno, & conserva la sua unione, & anchora pos-

The identification of sin and division is tied to the biblical story of the Fall, that is, it is related to a theological context in a rather arbitrary way. And, of course, according to the *Symposium* the separation of the primordial human beings occurs in order to weaken humans and to prevent them from sinning (e.g. plotting) against the gods. (If one cannot speak of the concept of sin in Aristophanes' perspective, then in the political context of a *coup d'état* against the gods.) In the *Dialoghi*, on the other hand, the connection of the myth of the androgyne with theology is much closer than in the commentary of Ficino, who perhaps deliberately sought to avoid too close an association of Aristophanes' speech with Christian doctrine.

Leone also briefly discusses the idea that the story in itself is only allegorical, that is, that the primordial hermaphrodite never existed in flesh and blood. Hence, the myth indicates that men and women before the Fall did not feel the urge to have sex because they were busy contemplating God, which is mankind's true purpose in life and is brought about by a harmonious proportion between the male and female aspects of the individual.

SO.: [...] For I do not believe that man and woman were at any time other than divided into two bodies [...]. PHI.: [...] to denote union not of the flesh, but of human essence and intellectual inclination, that is, they were united in blessed contemplation of the Divinity, not in sexual intercourse and carnal delights, but in order that they might be of greater assistance to one another.⁶¹

Finally, the idea of a merely allegorical reading of that passage is dismissed because God created the first humans (even while they were in paradise) in a way that they did not exclusively worship the intellectual aspects of the divinity, but also looked after their bodies (hence, obviously, desire did not cause the Fall and sex is not sinful). God created their intellect in such a form that it felt inclined towards the necessary physical desires.

siamo dire con verità, che essere l'huomo diviso il fa peccare, che in quanto è unito non ha inclinatione a peccare, ne à divertirsi da la sua unione, di modo che per essere il peccato, e la divisione de l'huomo quasi una medesima cosa, o due inseparabili e convertibili, si puo dire che da la divisione viene il peccato (come dice la sacra scrittura) e dal peccato viene la divisione (come dice Platone)."

⁶¹ Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 352-3; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 86v-87r: "SO.: [...] che non crede già che l'huomo e la donna in alcun' tempo fussero altrimenti che in due corpi divisi, [...]. PHI.: [...] non che fussero uniti corporalmente, ma uniti in essentia humana, et inclinatione mentale, cioè tutti due alla beata contemplatione divina, & non l'uno a l'altro per diletto e coito carnale, ma perche meglio l'uno a l' altro si potessi aiutare."

And the Divinity could foresee that this life of union of the two parts of man, and of the obedience of the feminine body to the masculine intellect, although it brought happiness to the man and immortality to his essence, which is his intellect, it rather corrupted his bodily and feminine part. And not only is this true of the individual, for when the intellect is inflamed with the knowledge and love of the eternal and divine it abandons all care of the body and leaves it to perish before its time, but also of the preservation of the human race; for those who are wedded to a life of intellectual contemplation despise corporeal love and flee from the lascivious act of generation, and this intellectual perfection would cause the human race to become extinct. Therefore God determined to establish some division or means between the feminine sensual part and the masculine intellectual part, turning the senses and the intellect to certain corporeal desires and activities necessary for the sustenance of the individual man for the preservation of the species.⁶²

So, even in its purest state the human intellect enters into a relationship with body: Leone speaks of the possible dangers of exaggerated intellectual contemplation, a topic not uncommon to Jewish discursive forma-

⁶²Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 356; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 88v-89r: “[...] pur’ preconoscendo la divinità che questa via d’unione de le due parti de l’huomo e dell’ obedientia de la corporea femminina alla intellettuale masculina, se bene felicitava l’huomo, & faceva immortale, l’essentia sua che è sua anima intellettiva faceva piu presto corrompere la parte sua corporea e femminina, così nel individuo, però che quando l’intelletto s’infiamma ne la cognitione, e amore de le cose eterne e divine abbandona la cura del corpo, & lasciala anzi tempo perire, come ancora ne la successione de la spetie humana, perche quelli che sono ardenti alle contemplationi intellettuali sprezano gl’amori corporei, & fuggono il lascivo atto de la generatione. Onde questa intellettual’ perfettione causaria perditione de la spetie humana; Per tanto Dio deliberò porre qualche divisione temperata frà la parte femminina sensuale, e la parte masculina intellettuale, tirando la sensualità, l’intelletto a alcuni desiderij, & atti corporei necessarij per la sostentatione corporea individuale, & per la successione de la spetie.” It is interesting to note how in his *Commento Pico* (*De hominis dignitate* III, 4: 528) endorses a totally different interpretation with almost the same words: here the body is again conceptualized as a temporary prison for soul, not as its necessary complement. “Similmente, se convertono gli occhi verso l’intelletto, non possono provvedere più al corpo ed è necessario che lascino la cura di quello; e per questa ragione queste anime, alle quali è forza per la cura del corpo lasciare el bene dello intelletto, la provvidenza divina la ha legate a corpi caduci e corruttibili, da’ quali solute in breve tempo possino, [...] alla loro intellettuale felicità ritornare; [...].” On possible connexions between Pico and Leone Ebreo, see Veltri, “Philo and Sophia.”

tions.⁶³ It is interesting to note that this idea is repeated in a different context when Filone in the *Dialoghi* says that the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle were complementary, as the former was primarily concerned with the soul, whereas the latter was more interested in the body. Both philosophers actually addressed contemporary ethical problems, as Plato was attacking his materialist predecessors so successfully that people stopped caring for the body, a negligence against which Aristotle's natural philosophy worked as an antidote.⁶⁴

The idea that love is born from the division of the intellect from the body is, of course, in sharp contrast to Neoplatonic concepts as well as, to a certain extent, to Plato's philosophy, because the love for corporeal beauty induces the onlooker to separate the body from the form of beauty.

[...] all human love and desire is born of the coalternate division of the human intellect and body, because the intellect inclined to its body, like the male to the female, desires and loves the things which belong to it, and if these objects are requisite and temperate, virtuously, on account of their moderation and restraint, and if they are excessive, then with lascivious and corrupt affections leading to sinful actions. Again the body, loving the soul as the woman the husband and male, rouses herself to desire his perfection, striving with sense, eyes and ears, and with the [inner] sense of imagination and memory, to obtain what is necessary for right thinking and eternal intellectual treasure in which the mind of man is blessed. And this desire and love is absolutely virtuous, and the more ardent it is, the more praiseworthy and perfect.⁶⁵

So, again, the trouble does not arise from soul or intellect becoming too close to the corporeal natural world, but from the separation of mind

⁶³Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 134-166.

⁶⁴Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 116v-117r.

⁶⁵Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 364-5; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 93v-94r: [...] che tutti gl'amori e desiderij humani nascono da la coalternata divisione dell'intelletto, e corpo humano, però che l'intelletto inclinato al corpo suo (come il maschio alla femmina) desia & ama le cose pertinenti à quello, & se sonno necessarie & moderate, sonno desiderij, & amori honesti per la loro moderatione & temperamento, & se sonno superflui, sonno lascivi, & dishoneste inclinationi e atti peccatorij; Ancora il corpo amando l'intelletto (come don[n]a il marito maschio) si solleva in desiare le perfetioni di quello sollecitando con li sentimenti, con li occhi, con le orecchie, & col senso, fantasia et memoria, d'acquistare il necessario per le rette cognitioni, & eterni habitii intellettuali, con che si felicita l'intelletto humano, & questi sonno desiderij, et amori assolutamente honesti, et quanto piu ardenti tanto piu laudabili, [...]."

and body. In this way Leone completely overturns not only Plato's anthropology but also Ficino's.

An interesting question arises on the extent to which Leone's reading was consciously directed against Ficino's Christian interpretation. There is at least some internal textual evidence that Leone was aware of, and hardly sympathetic to, Ficino's commentary. Although he does not mention the *De amore* directly, he refers in great detail to a passage of Ficino's commentary. In this case Leone makes decidedly critical remarks about the exaggerated allegorical reading of Diotima's myth of the birth of love, a criticism that could equally apply to Ficino's elaborate psychological interpretation of Aristophanes' primordial humans.⁶⁶

Some there are who understand by the birth of Venus the influence of the intelligence, first in the angelic world and then in the soul of the world, life already having been imparted by Jupiter, essence by Saturn, and first being by Caelus, who were the three Gods at the feast before the birth of the greater Venus in the angelic and lower world and in the world soul. But we take no heed of such abstract and endless, disproportionate allegories which do not correspond to the letter of the story.⁶⁷

Compare this to the following passage in Ficino's *Symposium* commentary

On the birthday of Venus, that is, when the Angelic Mind and the World Soul (which we call Venuses, for the reason which we have given elsewhere) were born from the supreme majesty of God. *While the gods were feasting*, that is, while Uranus, Saturn, and Jupiter were enjoying their respective powers. For at the time when the intelligence in the Angel and the power of procreating on the World Soul, powers which we rightly call twin Venuses, first came into being, the supreme God, whom they call Uranus, was already in existence; moreover, existence and life, which we call Saturn and Jupiter, already existed in the Angelic Mind, and also in the World soul there already existed the knowledge of the superior things

⁶⁶See Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 8, on the connections between anthropology and hermeneutics in both Christian and Jewish discursive formations.

⁶⁷Leone Ebreo, *The Philosophy of Love*, 368-9; Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore*, III, 95v: "Sono alcuni che dicono intendersi per la natività di Venere l'influentia dell'intelligentia dell'Angelo prima, & poi nell'anima del Mondo, havendo già partecipato la vita di Giove l'essentia di Saturno, & il primo essere di Celio, che erano li tre Dei del convito precedente a la natività di Venere magna, ne l'Angelo, & ne la mondana, & nell' Anima del Mondo. Ma noi non curaremo d'allegorie si astratte, & interminate, & impropionate al litterale fabuloso."

and the moving of the celestial bodies, which powers, again, we call Saturn and Jupiter.⁶⁸

There is more to this controversy than the (fairly obvious) observation that Leone is making a critical remark against Ficino's interpretation and that he therefore must have read at least parts of the commentary on the *Symposium*. Leone's refutation of "abstract and endless, disproportionate allegories" refers to a deep rift between rabbinic Judaism and Christianity that recently has been brilliantly discussed by Boyarin. In his *Tractatus adversus Judaeos* Augustine had accused the Jewish people of being the representatives of "Israel in the flesh" as opposed to the Pauline "spiritual Israel", or believers in Christ (Jews and non-Jews alike). Related to this initial and fundamental distinction, Augustine accused the Jewish tradition of being unable to see that external realities (bodies) have spiritual significance, and therefore of misunderstanding the real meaning of Scripture. Boyarin says that:

[...] whereas Augustine consigns the Jews to eternal carnality, he draws a direct connection between anthropology and hermeneutics. Because the Jews reject reading 'in the spirit,' therefore they are condemned to remain 'Israel in the flesh.' Allegory is thus, in his theory, a mode of relating to the body.⁶⁹

Thus, much more than just accusing a Christian philosopher of using the wrong interpretative strategies, Leone's brief remark refers to the core of the deep antagonism separating the two cultures, rifts which become obvious in the different discourses which are transformed into conflicting interpretative strategies regarding the body. From Leone's point of view, it

⁶⁸Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 116; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le Banquet*, VI, 7: 208-209: "In Veneris natalibus, id est, quando mens angelic et mundi anima, quas veneres ea ratione quam alias diximus nominamus, ex summa dei maiestate oriebantur. Diis discubebant, id est, Celus, Saturnus, Iupiter bonis propriis vescebantur. Nam cum in angelo intelligentia et in mundi anima vis generandi, quas proprie veneres geminas appellamus, prodibant in lucem, iam erat summus ille deus quem vocant Celum; essentia preterea et vita in angelo, quos Saturnum vocamus et Iovem, atque etiam in mundi anima inerat supernorum cognitio et celestium corporum agitatio, quos iterum Saturnum Iovemque vocamus." It is interesting to compare this passage again to Pico, *De hominis dignitate* III, 1: 521-522, which repeats Ficino's text and hence also may have been a target for Leone Ebreo's criticisms. See also *ibid.* 2. 13: 501-504.

⁶⁹Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 8. For a discussion of this entire complex of ideas, relating to Paul, Augustine, Origen and Philo, *ibid.*, 1-10.

is wrong to allegorize too much the myth of the birth of Eros, because it is foreign to an important part of his own interpretative tradition. Midrash, the hermeneutic system of rabbinic Judaism, refutes the Platonic-Christian dualism of body and soul thus “eschewing the inner-outer, visible-invisible body-soul dichotomies of allegorical reading. Midrash and platonic allegory are alternate techniques of the body.”⁷⁰

Leone Ebreo’s reading thus differs in many important respects from Ficino’s interpretation of Aristophanes’ speech. In contrast to Ficino, whose reading Leone appears to have been less than sympathetic to, the reading of the *Dialoghi* does not eclipse the body and the female aspect of creation. As in Plato, desire is fulfilled in the sexual act, at least temporarily. Physical love (seen as a yearning for original unity) incorporates in the *Dialoghi* a kind of redemptive power. The desire for the reintegration of male and female fits well into Leone’s theology, in which the entire creation is to be united to the godhead.⁷¹ In fact, “physical union is presented as a manifestation of a higher spiritual union; as such, it is not to be denied, but rather celebrated.”⁷² Whereas Ficino’s reading precludes the amorous conversation between men and women, the *Dialoghi* are entirely dedicated to that topic. In that sense Leone’s interpretation is perhaps more appealing to modern readers than Ficino’s version of a merely spiritual friendship between men, though with one important qualification: it remains impossible for Leone to acknowledge even the existence of any sort of homosexual love, as Ficino did.

Leone Ebreo’s structural difficulties become apparent when he tries to read one myth (Aristophanes) through another (Moses on Creation) or wants both myths in their more or less allegorical interpretations to coincide: hence the argument of the *Dialoghi* does not rest so much on reasoned arguments as on the superiority of the Mosaic tradition. Ficino, on

⁷⁰Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 9.

⁷¹Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d’amore*, III, 129v: “SO.: È adunque l’amoroso matrimonio de l’huomo, e de la donna simulacro del sacro & divino matrimonio del sommo bello, & la somma belleza, di che tutto l’universo proviene, se non che è differentia ne la somma belleza, che non solamente è mogliere del sommo bello, ma prima figliuola prodotta da lui. PHI.: Ancora in questo vedrai il simulacro nel primo matrimonio humano, che Eva prima fu cavata di Adam come padre, & figlia sua, & poi gli fu mogliere in matrimonio, di tutto questo discorso credo che debbi sufficientemente conoscere come l’amore de l’universo nacque de la prima belleza come di padre, & de la cognitione che ha di lei la prima intelligentia creata motrice del sommo orbe che tutto l’universo corporeo contiene [...].”

⁷²Yavneh, “The Spiritual Eroticism,” 87.

the other hand, sought to apply another sort of hermeneutics to his Neoplatonising psychological interpretation and tried to avoid any references to Christian theology.

In that respect, the price of Leone's assimilation of Aristophanes' myth to the Jewish discursive formation is high indeed: Plato is not an ancient author to be studied for his own sake, but merely the more or less confusing imitator of the source of sources, the *Torah*. In that sense, Ficino's approach is more open to the study of the classical heritage, which he tends to see as texts on an equal level with other sources of revelation. The common link between these two philosophical anthropologies, that of Leone Ebreo and that of Marsilio Ficino, is that they are to a notable extent rooted in their respective theologies and present a conceptualization which remains highly debatable in the case of the original setting of Aristophanes' story. Far from aiming at divine allegories of higher truths, the Athenian comedian had of course referred, however satirically, to the social and political context of the Athenian state, to the political bodies and sexual inclinations of real men and women, rather than to obscure divine mysteries. It seems that Giordano Bruno considered and understood this aspect of the story of the double humans better.

Bruno: The Convertibility of Eros into Money

The third and last work under consideration is not a philosophical treatise in the proper sense: Giordano Bruno's comedy *Il Candelaio* (*The Candlebearer*, 1582) can be read as a concise account of the ubiquitous metamorphoses of sexual desire and its convertibility into money. Accordingly, the play is populated by lechers of all sorts, pedophiles, homosexuals, and luckless alchemists, all of whom are examples of the universal drive for physical fulfillment. In this satire on the Renaissance Neoplatonic philosophy of love, the *candela* or candle functions as an obscene metaphor for the penis and at the same time as an allegory for the illumination of the mind. In a play that Moliterno has aptly described as "a microcosm of the degraded ideals of Renaissance culture as a whole,"⁷³ we find a final, distant, but nevertheless very comical, echo of Aristophanes' myth, whose the significance was completely reversed by Bruno.

The context of the appearance of the double humans is the following: Bartolomeo's sexual life is misled by his hunger for money, which is why he has started to neglect his wife and spends his time instead in an alchem-

⁷³Moliterno in Bruno, *Candlebearer*, 29.

ical laboratory. He entrusts all his funds to an impostor, who, before disappearing with the money, collaborates with a corrupt apothecary, Consalvo. When the latter meets Bartolomeo, the two men instantly engage in a vicious debate:

CONSALVO: I had words with him and we came to blows. Certain scoundrels dressed up as the night watch came running at the noise and tied us up [...]. they changed us around and tied us, hands behind our backs and bum to bum as you see us. First they took our purses and went off; then, remembering something, two of them returned and took our mantles and our berets and they sliced our shirt open with a razor. Then we wandered about and argued [...] as I tried to pull this good fellow along [...].⁷⁴

This strange couple is, of course, a perfect caricature of Aristophanes' primordial humans: both are united by the same desire (though for money and not for sexual union) and instead of loving each other they "came to blows." Being tied together, they are not at all strong or frightening, but deprived of all their belongings and hardly able to move:

CONSALVO: Let's get up. May you never get up again, either now nor ever! [...]

BARTOLOMEO: You peasant cuckold.

CONSALVO: You are biting now, are you? I swear by Saint Cuckoofat that if you want to play at biting, I'll rip your nose from your face and wrench your ears from your head.⁷⁵

Aristophanes had assigned the double males the most important role in public life, whereas the luckless couple in the *Candelaio* perceive their vulnerable state as a source of embarrassment and public shame: "Let's get up, pig; it will be even more embarrassing if they find us like this."⁷⁶ Also

⁷⁴Bruno, *Candlebearer*, 161; Bruno, *Candelaio*, V, 13: 107r-v: "Consalvo: Io havevo paroli con costui. siamo venuti a pugni. Corsero certi marioli in fazzone di birri al rumore, ne legorno [...] ne svoltorno l'altre mani a dietro in questa forma che vedete, à culo à culo. & per la prima ne levorno le borse & si partirono: poi ricordatosi meglio, ritornorno dui di essi; & ne levorno, i mantelli & le berrette, & ne hanno scuciti gli panni di sopra con un rasoio, dopo' siamo noi partiti, & habbiamo discorso [...] & al tirar che feci di questo buon huomo"

⁷⁵Bruno, *Candlebearer*, 160; Bruno, *Candelaio*, V, 12: 106r: "Consalvo: Alziamoci che non possi alzarti né mo', ne mai. [...] Bartolomeo: Cornuto coteconaccio fuuuh. Consalvo: Oimè mi mordi, anh? Giuro per S. Cuccufatto: che si tu vuoi giocare a mordere, ti strepparrò il naso di faccia, ò ver un'orecchia di testa."

⁷⁶Bruno, *Candlebearer*, 160; Bruno, *Candelaio*, V, 13: 106v: "Consalvo: Alziamoci porco; sarremo peggio svergognati si sarremo trovati cossi."

there is not even a trace left of the ability to move (let alone to conquer mount Olympus) and one can hardly imagine that the two men would wish Hephaestus would join them together.

CONSALVO: [...] Don't you want to get up?

BARTOLOMEO: I told you that I want to remain here like this for the whole night. [...]

CONSALVO: [...] as I tried to pull, he fell like an overloaded donkey and he brought me down with him; and then, out of spite, he wouldn't get up.⁷⁷

At first sight, to a passer-by, these double humans seem to be just drunkards, ("Hey, there, you drunkards. What's the matter?"⁷⁸) who have to be separated and sent in opposite directions, so as not to start quarrelling again. "Don't start beating each other again because the first one to move will have two against him."⁷⁹ Their manner of saying goodbye again emphasizes the complete reversal of Aristophanes' tale: instead of longing to be united again, they simply hate each other: "Hope to see you again in a hundred years."⁸⁰

Though Bruno admittedly does not give any direct evidence that he is referring to Aristophanes' tale, it nevertheless has to be emphasized that unacknowledged parody and irreverent travesty of Plato's venerable dialogues are a common feature of Bruno's writings.⁸¹ It is perhaps no coincidence that the Paduan philosopher Marcantonio Genua (or Passeri) (1490/1-1563) had a medal cast with two engraved humans who are welded together at their backs struggling to make their way: the inscription makes Bruno's irony even more acrimonious "Philosophia duce regredimur" (With philosophy taking the lead we will get back).⁸²

⁷⁷Bruno, *Candlebearer*, 161; Bruno, *Candelaio*, V, 13: 106v: "Consalvo: [...] Non ti voi alzare? Bartolomeo: Io ti ho detto che voglio dimorar tutta questa notte cossi." Ibid, 107v: "[...] Consalvo: Al tirar che feci di costui: cascò come un asino che porta troppo gran soma: & ha fatto cascar anchora me, & per perfidia non si vuole alzare."

⁷⁸Bruno, *Candlebearer*, 161; Bruno, *Candelaio*, V, 13: 107r: "Scaramuré: [...] Olà, imbreachi? che havete, che fate cossi llà?"

⁷⁹Bruno, *Candlebearer*, 162; Bruno, *Candelaio*, V, 13: 108r: "Scaramuré: [...] Guardate di battervi: perche il primo di voi che si mouerà; ne harrà dui contra."

⁸⁰Bruno, *Candlebearer*, 162; Bruno, *Candelaio*, V, 13: 108r: "Consalvo: Arrivederci da ora a cent'anni."

⁸¹Compare for example Bruno, *Candelaio*, V, 9-10: 98r-101r with *Cratylus* 431b-442a.

⁸²On this medal, see Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, 201-202 with n. 40 and fig. 67, 68.

Moreover, it is crucial to observe that the *Candelaio* realigns the myth of the primordial human beings with the politics of power. Neither Consalvo nor Bartolomeo are hiding divine truths; they are disunited by their greed for money, that is, by their desire to act in society. Thus, although for Bruno the *Symposium* has lost its authority as a source of divine revelation (so assiduously elaborated and contested by generations of Renaissance intellectuals), the *Candelaio* nevertheless brings back some of the original irony and the political background of Aristophanes' speech.⁸³ Bruno is not only aware of the satirical and comical mood of the original text; by overturning the content of the myth, he also forges a new work, which is intentionally only a distant echo of Plato's original intentions.⁸⁴ In that sense, the *Candelaio* opens new perspectives for future generations to read the *Symposium* as a literary resource in the spirit of Aristophanes rather than in the mood of Plato, thus again directing the reader's attention away from a more or less linear commentary back to the literary and dramatic setting of a text, the *mise en scène* of supposedly abstract thought.⁸⁵

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⁸³ Moreover, Bruno does not seem to regard homosexuality as repulsive or against nature: this becomes obvious as the main character of the play, Bonifacio ('the *candelaio*' or candelbearer) is originally homosexual and becomes, much to his detriment, a womanizer.

⁸⁴ A quotation from Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, 24-25, concerning the relationship between texts is to the point: "Whatever an earlier play called something like *King Lear* contains, its translation into Shakespeare's medium is inherently predictable; and however interesting the comparison may be in certain cases, it cannot determine what is going on in the Shakespeare. A complementary relation is that between a work of Shakespeare and certain spectacles or panoramas "based upon" that work. In that case you might call Shakespeare's text not a treasure but a sea, from which various items—treasures, corpses, shells, weeds, more or less at will—were lifted and heaped on the shore of big entertainment."

⁸⁵ Attention among classical philologists to the literary setting of Plato's works has been growing over the past decades; see, for example, Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 227: "Plato tells us that we cannot throw away the images and the drama as delightful decorations, or lift out his arguments from the "literary" context for isolated dissection. Still less we can abandon the arguments or relax the demands of our critical faculties. The whole thing is a music discourse, which asks us the full participation of all parts of our souls." Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 15: "Forms of writing were not seen as vessels into which different contents could be indifferently poured; form was itself a statement, a content."

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ROBERT BURANELLO

THE HIDDEN WAYS AND MEANS OF ANTONIO
VIGNALI'S *LA CAZZARIA*

"What has a refined bewitching orator
to do with the vulgar masculine?"

Lucian of Samosata, *The Rhetorician's Vade Mecum*, xii

Antonio Vignali's dialogue *La Cazzaria* was written in Italian between 1525 and 1527 and, much like other early pornographic material, enjoyed a certain clandestine notoriety as a scandalous, even obscene work of Italian Renaissance erotic literature. It was first shared among the author's peers at the Accademia degli Intronati of Siena and later, through academic connections between Tuscany and the Veneto, copies, translations, and elaborations were disseminated throughout Europe by means of various underground channels.¹ *La Cazzaria* has earned Vignali a place of distinction among such notorious authors as Pietro Aretino and Antonio Rocco since many consider *La Cazzaria* the summit of sodomitic satire that inspired subsequent works of early modern pornography.² Vignali's text is striking for the explicitly homoerotic nature of the dialogical interaction of the interlocutors, the fable and embedded dialogue of speaking genitalia that provide a critical political allegory of early sixteenth-century Siena, the

¹ For the historical background and publishing history, see Pasquale Stoppelli's "Nota bio-bibliografica," 29-33 and "Note al testo," 153-162 in his edition of *La Cazzaria*. See also Paula Findlen, "Humanism, Politics and Pornography," 92.

² In the introduction to his English translation, *La Cazzaria. The Book of the Prick*, Ian Frederick Moulton explores the connection between Vignali's text and those of Pietro Aretino, among others; see pp. 1-8. See also Carla Forno, *Il "libro animato,"* 310. Regarding the relationship between *La Cazzaria* and Antonio Rocco's *L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola*, see Findlen, 88, 94; and Philippe-Jean Salazar, "Sex and Rhetoric," 18. The relation between Vignali's and Rocco's texts is a rich and potentially very fruitful field of inquiry regarding the treatment of submission, seduction, complicity, and knowledge; this, however, is beyond the immediate scope of the present study. In addition to the introductions and notes to the Italian and English editions of *L'Alcibiade*, I refer to Salazar's insightful article. See note 30, below, for one further observation regarding Antonio Vignali, Pietro Aretino, and Antonio Rocco.

academic flavour of the exchanges, and the cross-pollination of distinct models of classical dialogue forms. By exploring these aspects, I intend to discern “the hidden ways and means”³ of Vignali’s witty and intellectually seductive art that contribute to making *La Cazzaria* a work of erudite obscenity that has emerged from the shadows of the dubious world of erotic curiosities for the connoisseur of *spintria*⁴ in order to shed light on Cinquecento social and literary practices. In other words, the unveiling of the hidden ways and means of *La Cazzaria* should clarify aspects of “the intersections of sexuality, politics and learning” that characterize Renaissance pornography as an issue of fundamental importance.⁵

As its etymology reveals, pornography was borne of the literature and imagery that recounted the exploits of prostitutes. More broadly, pornography may be characterized as those works that treat acts of an explicitly sexual nature in order to arouse thoughts of non reproductive gratification which conflict with accepted rules of religious orthodoxy, moral conduct, and/or social decorum.⁶ While its classical roots can be traced back to Lucian’s *Dialogue of the Courtesans*, modern pornography emerged in sixteenth-century Italy as political satire and coincided with the rise of print culture and strict censorship. The incidents surrounding *I modi* and the *Sonetti lussuriosi* are a famous case in point.⁷ With the rise of print culture,

³This quotation is Ian Frederick Moulton’s translation of the original “i modi e le vie coperte.” The English passage appears on page 77 of Moulton’s translation; the Italian is on page 44 of the recent edition. More expansive and better contextualized versions of each passage are provided further on. The references to, and quotations from the Italian edition shall be taken from Pasquale Stoppelli’s edition and will be indicated by referring to the Italian title, while those taken from Ian Frederick Moulton’s translation will use the English title. All references and quotations will be made parenthetically in the body of the text. Unless otherwise indicated, all other translations are mine.

⁴On *spintria* (or *sphinctria*), see Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, 56.

⁵Findlen, “Humanism,” 52.

⁶Regarding the definitions and debates over what constitutes pornography, see Laurence O’Toole, *Pornocopia*, 1-26. Its thorny and elusive nature is summed up by O’Toole with these words: “Despite all the talk and trials over porn, any attempt to fix upon a satisfactory, abiding definition has failed” (6). Although O’Toole does discuss the differences between what is considered pornography and eroticism, perhaps the most succinct definition was provided by Roman Polanski during the making of his film, *Bitter Moon*: “Eroticism is where you use a feather and pornography is where you use the whole chicken” (Peter Howarth).

⁷Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, 3-19. See also Lynn Hunt “Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity,” 10.

manuscripts that previously were circulated by hand among close associates or confidantes were now more easily available to a far greater number of people. Against the background of the recent Reformation, the Catholic Church sought to curtail and eradicate all religiously unorthodox, morally scandalous, and lascivious works through the Inquisition and the Index of Prohibited Books. In addition to Protestant works that defamed the Church, pornographic materials were also censured and, where possible, destroyed. Conversely, in a population that had grown accustomed to acquiring books these efforts created a special underground market for such exceptional material.⁸

Even though *La Cazzaria* did not enjoy anywhere near the fame of Aretino's *Ragionamento*, a pornographic dialogue on whoredom, it was circulated throughout Europe in manuscript and print forms and gained a number of enthusiastic supporters and imitators.⁹ While one point of distinction between *La Cazzaria* and the *Ragionamento* is homoeroticism, another is the heightened degree of obscenity in Vignal's dialogue. If, by obscenity, we take Jean Baudrillard's definition as "the absolute proximity of the thing seen,"¹⁰ then the speaking Cazzi, Coglioni, Potte, and Culi of Vignal's text may outdo the whores of Aretino. These characters are simultaneously an integral part of Vignal's political allegory and a clever display of his literary experimentation. The homoerotic nature of the academic discussions between Arsiccio, the older and more experienced teacher, and the younger Sodo, centres on the attempts of the former to seduce the latter by convincingly arguing for the superiority of "bugerare" over "fotere." The references to anal sex in Aretino's works notwithstanding, Vignal's dialogue is less inhibited and would run a far greater risk of upsetting the moral and civic authorities of the time. As Guido Ruggiero has pointed out, sodomy was associated with the most extensive language of sex crime, regularly appealed to fear of divine reprisals in the minds of the populace, and received cruel and severe penalties from the authorities.¹¹ In *La com-*

⁸Findlen, "Humanism," 53-57. See also Grendler's chapter IX, "The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605," in his *Culture and Censorship*.

⁹See Ian Frederick Moulton's introduction (51-58) and Pasquale Stoppelli's "Nota Bio-bibliografica" (29-33) and "Nota al testo" (153-158) in his edition of *La Cazzaria*.

¹⁰Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, 59. See also O'Toole, *Pornocopia*, 8-13. On Vignal's obscenity, see Nino Borsellino's introduction to *La Cazzaria*, 7.

¹¹Regarding the severe penalties for convictions of sodomy, such as castration, burning, decapitation or a combination of these, see Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros*, 111-113. Ruggiero points to the rise of Tuscan humanist culture and the

media degli Ingannati, a play by the Accademia degli Intronati datable to the same period as Vignalì's dialogue, this reality is given comic dimensions in IV,i where, in an animated argument, Stragualcia makes a threatening comment regarding Messer Piero (whom he had earlier insulted as "sodomito") with the words, "I could get him burned at the stake, and still he does everything he can to get on the wrong side of me—in more senses than one" ("s'io volesse, il potrei fare ardere, e pur mi sta a rompere il culo").¹² In the tradition of salacious satire, *La Cazzaria* is an audaciously homoerotic dialogue that intrigues and compels the reader to delve further into its motives and mechanisms.

The work opens with a frame tale that provides a fictional presentation of the dialogue's discovery and subsequent circulation. In a letter from il Bizzarro to Moscone, two other members of the Academy of the Intronati, the first relates how, while waiting in the study for Arsiccio (another Intronato and principal interlocutor of the dialogue) to return with "his slut" ("quella sua carogna") with whom he was to have sex, he began to leaf through "certain naughty books, among which I found many sketches of Arsiccio's own composition, and—by God—some pretty good ones" (73; "certi libracci, tra i quali [...] molti schizzi di varie sue composizioni, per Dio, assai belle," 38). *La Cazzaria* was among them. After his brief and squalid encounter with the servant girl,¹³ he stole the dialogue and sent it off to Moscone.

Ora io ve la mando con patto che subito che l'avete letta me la rimandiate. E sopra tutto guardatevi che altra persona che voi non la veggia; impe-

immigration of Tuscans as a possible reason for the flourishing homosexual culture in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Venice. See also his *Binding Passions*, 175-222.

¹² Accademiici Intronati, *Gli Ingannati*, 196; *The Deceived*, trans. Penman, 250. To continue the play on words, I would translate the lines in this way: "If I wanted, I could have him burned, yet he is still being a pain in the ass." See also Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade*, 222. Regarding the theme of homosexual love in the popular literature of the time, see Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 4.

¹³ The Italian text refers to her as "carogna" (38), which Moulton renders as "slut" (74). The terminology regarding women is frequently demeaning in this dialogue. Typical for the time, there is no mention of women being allowed access to the teacher-student dynamic where, especially in this episode, it appears to have been overshadowed by the issue of the 'commodification' of woman. Regarding the education of women in the Renaissance, see, for example, King, "Virgo et virago": Women and High Culture" in *Women of the Renaissance*, 157-239; for the connection between woman and commodity in the Renaissance, see Freccero, "Economy, Woman, and Renaissance Discourse," 192-208.

roché, ov'egli lo sapesse o risapesse, come quello che è più sdegnoso d'uno culo, ne pigliarebbe tal colera e così ne salterebbe in bestia, che mai più mi lascerebbe entrare nel suo studio, e così mi priverei di poter vedere parecchie altre sue belle cose, over operette, de le quali egli fa menzione in questo dialogo, quali ho visto e in parte lette. E se ei non si avede di questa, io spero di farvele vedere in questo medesimo modo; e però leggetela e quanto più presto potete mandatela indietro. (Vignalì, *La Cazzaria*, 38-39)

(Now I send you this dialogue, on the condition that you send it back to me as soon as you have read it. Above all, be sure that no one else sees it but you, because, if Arsiccio knew of this or heard about it, he would be more scornful than an asshole; he would practically turn into a wild beast, and he would never again permit me to enter his study. This would prevent me from seeing a few other pretty things of his – little trifles that are mentioned in this dialogue, which I have seen and, in part, read. But if he doesn't notice this one is missing, I hope to send you more of the same in a similar way. So read it right away and send it back to me as quickly as you can. [Vignalì, *The Book of the Prick*, 74])

This clever fiction is very effective and revealing. In the first place, the opening reflects the work's clandestine diffusion and secret enjoyment among select *cognoscendi*. The familiar *topos* of the unauthorized dissemination of a work that the author deems unready for publication is presented here as outright theft by an ungrateful guest. Il Bizzarro notices the superior eloquence of this naughty book and steals it in order to bring it to the attention of others. Consonant with the general theme of *La Cazzaria*, an illicit act is justified because it is deemed to have beneficial consequences. Hence, eloquence and theft are paired and the reader is drawn into a relationship of complicity with the thief. It is by no accident that the talents of eloquence and thievery are joined since this would allude to the mythological figure of Mercury who, in the Lucianic tradition, is a polysemic deity who represents contrasting qualities. While he is referred to in terms of eloquence, mediation, and culture, he is also the god of shopkeepers and thieves, and is recognized in both the Christian and pagan worlds.¹⁴ The references to Arsiccio as a "culo" and a "bestia" suggest transformation, a significant theme within the tradition of the dialogue, both the intellectual progress associated with the pedagogical ideal of Socratic

¹⁴de La Garanderie, "Le nom de Mercure," 15-17; Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins*, 179. See also Calvino's reference to Mercury as "*principium individuationis*" in *Six Memos*, 51-52.

dialogue and the physical metamorphosis of characters into lower-order beings that populate Lucianic dialogues.

By means of the teacher-student dynamic, characterized by questioning that intends to have the pupil eventually come to the realisation of his erroneous thoughts and actions, in the Socratic dialogue the teacher guides the student's development, draws out his latent potential, and brings about the transformation of the student into a well-rounded individual.¹⁵ There is also a significant connection between the popularity of the Socratic dialogue as a didactic tool and, simultaneously, one of pornographic discourse in the Renaissance.¹⁶ In the Lucianic tradition, transformation is viewed differently. For example, the goal of transforming society through satire is at the forefront. This is accomplished through the coupling of peculiar and fantastic characters as unlikely interlocutors (for example, the personifications of concepts, deities, insects and animals) in locations freed from all spatio-temporal constraints that Forno describes as "the coordinates of this universe in perpetual metamorphosis".¹⁷ As we see, Vignali's frame tale offers important clues regarding the interpretation of his work, not the least of which is the experimentation between Socratic and Lucianic dialogical models.

The two principal speakers in *La Cazzaria* are identified by their academic names within the Sienese Academy of the Intronati, Arsiccio and Sodo, and refer clearly to the author, Antonio Vignali, and his younger friend Marcantonio Piccolomini.¹⁸ Although historically real, their identi-

¹⁵Wilson, *Incomplete Fictions*, 23-28.

¹⁶Salazar, "Sex and Rhetoric," 5-19.

¹⁷Forno, *Il "Libro animato"*, 179-188. Among the numerous Lucianic dialogues that appeared in the Italian Renaissance, *La Circe* by Giovan Battista Gelli stands out for its influence and use of humans transformed into animals by the mythological sorceress as speakers. Of particular importance is *Momus* by Leon Battista Alberti. It was completed between 1443 and 1450 and circulated among scholars for many years before the first printed edition appeared in Rome in 1520, shortly before the composition of Vignali's text. The tardy publication of Alberti's dialogue was actually quite significant since it appeared at the same time that the works of Erasmus and More were being translated and receiving considerable attention. See Sarah Knight's Introduction to *Momus*, vii-xxv.

¹⁸In *The Book of the Prick* (165, n. 3), Moulton provides a brief identification of the two interlocutors. Their discussions are presented mimetically, without any trace of diegetic description as in Pietro Bembo's *Asolani* or Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, two extremely popular and influential dialogues of the same period. This mimetic quality places greater emphasis on the importance of the words spoken by the interlocutors; any consideration of setting is secondary.

ties in this text are tied to their academic affiliation. There is an unmistakable academic flavour to their dialogical exchanges as evidenced by the use of the vernacular instead of Latin and in the manner in which philosophical, scientific and even political topics are engaged through a discussion concerning “all the causes and circumstances of fucking” (74; “tutte le ragioni de le circonstanze del fottere,” 38). Like most academies of the period, the Intronati boasted of broad intellectual pursuits and literary experimentation.¹⁹ As Paula Findlen has indicated, pornographic literature was particularly fitting to the goals of most academies since it “destabilized the site of artistic literary production by purporting to dissolve the boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low.’”²⁰ *La Cazzaria* may be viewed as typical of this milieu where the equation between humanism and libertinism often led to accusations that members frequently occupied their leisure time writing about prostitutes and sodomy.²¹ This uncanonical work was produced by a group of scholars who considered themselves a cultural elite free from the obsessive restrictions of the universities and the obsequious sycophancy of the courts. It expresses unequivocal praise for scholars whose training and erudition single this group out as ideal practitioners of erotic love. The many references to the superiority of the erudite lover are characterized by his ability to combine seamlessly the lofty with the lewd, the brainy with the bawdy. He must be the consummate orator, able to shift modes and registers with ease as circumstances demanded.

From the beginning, the scholar is praised over and above the boorish braggart in his ability to satisfy a woman completely. While the rustic lover may be equally equipped to please a woman physically, wit and discretion are not among his endowments.

Appreso se noi vorremo pensare che bisogni ingegno a saper trovare *i modi e le vie coperte*, non si cercarà mai altrove che fra i literati, quali non si mettono a tale esercizio se non per sublimità d'ingegno; e troverai tutte le malizie e tutte le ribalderie dove sono i scolari, né saria possibile d'imaginarsi le acute e sottili invenzioni sopra di quelle cose ch'essi vogliono

¹⁹Richard S. Samuels notes that, according to the association's bylaws, the members were devoted to “reading, composing, interpreting, and writing” in what they regarded as the three most important languages: Tuscan, Latin, and Greek” and, further, that they covered “an extremely wide range of subjects: philosophy, the humanities, law, music, poetry, mathematics; or, as the bylaws put it ‘all disciplines and all liberal arts’”; Samuels, “Benedetto Varchi,” 608.

²⁰Findlen, “Humanism,” 59. She also claims that by thus rendering authorship problematic these writers of pornography included themselves in the “third sex” among prostitutes and sodomites.

²¹Findlen, “Humanism,” 86; Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 232.

mettersi a fare: oltra che d'animo e di sicurezza di core sono tutti o la maggior parte valorosi e grandi, e conoscono quello che sia bene e quello che sia male, e queste cose che sono vituperose e quelle che sono d'animo generoso, e non saprebbono fare se non quelle cose che fossero virtuose e gentili. Ma di molto più stima fo i belli ragionamenti, le dolci parole, i dilettevoli intrattenimenti, i loro faceti e amorosi motti, di quali più prendono conforto quelle donne gentili, che hanno l'animo elevato, che del fottere [...]. (Vignalì, *La Cazzaria*, 44) [emphasis added]

(On the other hand, if one considers the wit necessary to find *hidden ways and means*, one will only look among educated men, who always apply themselves to such activities with an excellent and keen wit. You will find all maliciousness and dirty tricks where scholars are, and you cannot imagine all the sharp and subtle lies they tell about things they want to do. Beyond that, in spirit and certainty of heart they are all—or for the most part—valorous and great. They know what is good and what is bad, which things are disgraceful and which show a generous spirit, and they would be incapable of doing anything that was not virtuous and noble. But most of all they are esteemed for their beautiful conversation, their sweet words, their pleasing entertainments, their jokes and amorous pleasantries, which noble and refined ladies enjoy even more than fucking [Vignalì, *The Book of the Prick*, 77-78]). [emphasis added]

The dialogue itself opens rather casually, seemingly in mid-conversation, with Arsiccio responding to Sodo and admonishing him for his ineloquence and social ineptitude at a gathering in which he was asked “why the balls never go either into the cunt or the asshole” (81; “la cagione perché i coglioni non entrano mai in potta o in culo,” 48).

ARSICCIO Io intendo a punto, Sodo, e confessoti essere vero quanto mi dici. Ma io ti vorrei ammettere queste tue scuse, quando tu avessi a parlar con donne o con uomini di qualche gravità, ove s'appartiene essere modesto negli atti e ne le parole; e non dove tu fossi in un ritrovo di giovani a te e per età e per esercizio conformi, e per prendere solazzo adunati, come è stato questo di stasera, ove pareva lecito di ragionar di tutte quelle cose che ci venivano a bocca. Imperoché ancora che biasimevole e vituperoso sia il mettersi a ragionare di queste cose disoneste come fottere e bugerare, ed empirsi la bocca di cazzo, potta, culo e altri simili, non dimeno non mi piace che, occorrendovi pur ragionare, tu non ne sappia dare qualche risposta: perché secondo i filosofi non è così brutta e così vil cosa, che non sia molto più vile e brutto non saperla. (Vignalì, *La Cazzaria*, 41)

(Arsiccio: I understand perfectly, Sodo, and I'll admit what you tell me is true. But your excuses are only valid when it comes to speaking with dignified women or men—when it is appropriate to be modest in action and speech. It is different when you are at a gathering of young people,

similar to you in age and habits, who get together for pleasure—as was the gathering this evening—where it seems permissible to speak of anything that comes into your mouth. It may be shameful and disgraceful to start talking of indecent things like fucking and buggery and to fill your mouth with cocks, cunts, assholes, and such, but it still doesn't please me that if such things come up you don't know how to discuss them. According to philosophers, no matter how ugly and vulgar a thing is, it is more vulgar and ugly not to be knowledgeable about it. [Vignali, *The Book of the Prick*, 75]).

The opening establishes that the reader has happened upon the interlocutors during an animated disagreement. As a consequence of missing the previous statements to which Arsiccio's first words are a response, curiosity is aroused and the reader is immediately engaged in order to deduce what was said previously. Consequently, a certain verve and momentum are established. Furthermore, Arsiccio adopts the role of teacher to Sodo's pupil, thereby confirming a power relationship. His intellectual superiority over Sodo is confirmed by the way in which he responds to Sodo's protestations that, since most women prefer their men stupid, he attempts to "seem as foolish as possible" (76; "dimostrare d'essere più presto sciocco che altrimenti"). Arsiccio responds by saying, "Certainly it can't have been very hard for you to look like a fool if you believe that" (76; "Per certo che tu vi dèi aver durata poca fatica in fare lo sciocco, se tu sei in cotesta openione," 43).

Arsiccio completely rejects Sodo's protestations that "My philosophy does not deal with cocks and assholes" (80; "la mia filosofia non tratta di cazzi o culi," 48) because, in order to be truly knowledgeable, one must be prepared to speak of all aspects of the natural world as well as the speculative. By a deft mixture of registers and argumentation, Arsiccio declares that the natural world, including human sexuality, is of fundamental importance. Indeed, sexual knowledge is seen as the core of natural philosophy. It is not passive but active knowledge, in the sense that one participates in it and, like all other forms of knowledge, must be prepared to discuss it eloquently. Never again must Sodo be in a similarly embarrassing social situation. By allowing himself to be held up to ridicule without responding, Sodo has assumed the passive position that, at least on a social level, has 'feminized' him.²²

²²On the stigma attached to the passive male in the Renaissance, see Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros*, 121-122. David Chambers and Brian Pullan provide a Venetian document of 1509 that conveys the social preoccupation associated with this practice; *Venice*, 124-125. For the classical antecedent of male passivity, see Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 194-196.

Arsiccio's arguments are philosophical reasoning presented in coarse or, rather, realistic language intended to inspire a virile, active response. For example, when he frequently peppers his responses with rhetorical questions intended to provoke his pupil and indicate the error of his thinking, he also points to the practical experience that should inform the student's opinions since "from the mixing of the cunt, the cock and the asshole comes the science of fucking and buggering, and thus knowledge is enlarged" (82; "del mescolamento poi de la potta, del cazzo e del culo ne segue la cognizione del fottere e del bugerare, e così viene allargando la scienza" 49). The teacher's provocative stance is made clear in the following passage:

ARSICCIO [...] E che diavolo ne fai tu intorno al culo, se tu non ne impari cosa alcuna? Che diavolo ti è giovato e giova il tanto fottere ed essere bugerato, se tu non ne hai tanto di costrutto di saper almanco perché i coglioni non ti sono un tratto entrati nel culo o tu non gli hai al altro o dietro o dinanzi cacciati? (Vignali, *La Cazzaria*, 50)

(Arsiccio: [...] What the devil have you been doing poking around the asshole if you haven't learned anything about it? What use has it been to you to have fucked and to have been buggered so often if you haven't even contrived to learn at the very least why no one's balls have ever once entered your ass and you've never put yours in anyone from the front or behind? [Vignali, *The Book of the Prick*, 83]).

Throughout *La Cazzaria*, Vignali enhances Arsiccio's responses by providing extradialogical *quaestiones* in the margins of the text, typical of philosophical dialogues and treatises. These *quaestiones* range from the philosophically sound, "Why it is Praiseworthy to Control Oneself" (149; "Perché sia lodevole il vincere se stesso" 120), to the philosophically questionable, "Why Women's Asses Have No Hair" (90; "Perché il culo de le donne non sia peloso" 58), to the philosophically vulgar, "Why, as Soon as Man has a Shit, He Looks at the Turd" (95; "Perché subito che l'omo ha cacato miri la merda" 62). Although the reading public for whom Vignali intended the work will recognize this as satirical, Arsiccio's effective and eclectic mixture of registers and references serves to intimidate Sodo and reinforce the former's position of dominance within the dialogue.

Whereas Sodo's exchanges are either weak protestations or short expressions of a desire for clarity, Arsiccio's are longer and more complex, and also more replete with learned references. Sodo is undeniably submitting to Arsiccio. This is made abundantly clear after Arsiccio has finished his praise of anal sex. Not only does this exchange reveal the teacher-student dynamic, but it leads to the intriguing relationship between power and knowledge that informs their interaction.

SODO: Arsiccio, tu mi tocchi i lombi con questo tuo ragionare. Hammi accesso d'una voglia e d'un fervore, ch'io non vorrei essere in paradiso e non saper queste cose, e voglio confessare ch'io mi vergogno come un cazzo e parmi essere stato sino qui ignorante. Hai mille ragioni, e lo conosco ch'io ho fatto male a non ti dimadar di tutte queste cose, ma io non pensai che 'l fottere andasse più in là che ficcare il cazzo in culo o in potta e menando compire. Ora per quello ch'io ne ho udito, il manco piacere è questo.

ARSICCIO: Io non t'ho detto cosa alcuna, Sodo. Ma innanzi ch'io dorma, già ch'abbiamo commodità di ragionare, poiché siamo entrati in questa materiale, ti voglio dir cose che tu confesserai fin a qui esserti inteso poco di questo mondo, se il sonno non ne impedisce. Perché io mi sento in vena di dire, andiamo a casa e colchiamoci; e così nel letto diremo o tutto o parte de le cagioni perché i coglioni stanno fuor de la potta. E quell ch'io non ti porrò dire questa sera lo serbarò a domattina (Vignali, *La Cazzaria*, 68-69).

(Sodo: Arsiccio, your reasoning fills me with ecstasy. You have enflamed me with fervour and desire; I would rather be cast out of Paradise than to be ignorant of these things, and I want to confess that I'm as shameful as a cock. I feel that I have been entirely ignorant until now. You're completely right, and I know I've done badly not to ask you about all of these things, but I didn't think that fucking went beyond thrusting your cock into a cunt or an asshole until you came. Now from what I've heard, that is the least of pleasures.

Arsiccio: I haven't told you anything, Sodo. But before I go to bed, while I still have the energy for rational discussion, since we have entered into these matters, I would like to tell you—if sleep does not prevent me—about things in this world that, as you admit, you have little understood until now. Since I feel in the mood to talk, let's go to my house and go to bed together. And in that way, in bed, I will tell you some or all of the reasons that the balls stay outside the cunt. Those things that I can't tell you tonight we'll save for tomorrow morning. [Vignali, *The Book of the Prick*, 100])

Through his argumentation, Arsiccio leads Sodo to question his uninformed opinions. On the few occasions when Sodo interrupts or deviates the discussion (Vignali, *La Cazzaria*, 94-100; *Book of the Prick*, 124-131), Arsiccio threatens to stop talking and leave him to his own ignorance. Sodo beats a hasty retreat and signals his submission. Throughout the dialogue, the student is led to the realisation of his error, a Socratic *elenchus*, and must admit defeat. Arsiccio's words are intended to be both persuasive and seductive. As can be seen from Arsiccio's response, the superior eloquence of the teacher is linked to the body, for Sodo's intellectual submission implies a physical one. Just as Arsiccio argued earlier that the physical must

go hand in hand with the speculative, so too must their speculative discussions be further grounded in material reality. The teacher's theoretical instruction leads to practical implementation. In other words, the talk of sex leads to sex. Contrary to the standard Socratic dialogue, where love inspires the teacher to instruct the student and guide his transformation into a superior being,²³ in this dialogue there appears to be a price attached. The insemination of knowledge is associated with physical insemination.

Arsiccio's intellectual superiority is further proven by his erudite references to works of classical antiquity. While at times fanciful, if not corrupted, they are perfectly concordant with his ultimate goal of intellectual and physical conquest. Arsiccio's claim to extensive knowledge of genitalia is supported by reference to the trilogy he is soon to publish. Entitled *Lumen pudendorum*, it is subdivided into three books: *On the Genealogy and Baptism of the Cock*, *On the Nativity and Works of the Cunt*, and *On the Life and Passion of the Asshole* (139; *De la genealogia e battesimo del cazzo*, *De la natività e opera de la potta*, and *De la vita e passione del culo*; 82).²⁴ More directly, it provides evidence of his ability to bestow on inappropriate topics the gravity usually reserved for more weighty subjects. Arsiccio's fictitious claim to authority seems to convince Sodo to pay careful attention to the narrated fable concerning the congress of Cazzi, Potte, Coglioni and Culi that is presented with similar vague references to the same authoritative classical authors.

The inclusion of speaking genitalia and explicitly pornographic exchanges is specifically Lucianic in inspiration. Couched in classical references, vague allusions to a by-gone age, and confusion concerning chronological coordinates,²⁵ this veiled political allegory regarding the imminent

²³On the concept of *philia* and its association with the imparting of knowledge through conversation, see Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 201-203. On the explicitly erotic nature of this transformation, see Salazar, "Sex and Rhetoric," 12-17.

²⁴Despite the academic preference for the vernacular, Arsiccio declares that the composition of this work in Latin will keep it from the hands of the vulgar rabble that will not appreciate it (Vignali, *La Cazzaria*, 83). Nonetheless, this choice is very much in keeping with the academic elitism expressed throughout the dialogue.

²⁵The nonsensical and fantastic spatio-temporal coordinates provided by Vignali are, "[...] in the days when Beffania held the Dukedom of Archifanfano di Baldracca in Aldalecca, on Giudecca near the Yellow Sea [...]" (139; "[..] al tempo che la Beffanìa teneva il ducato de l'arcifanfano di Baldracca in Aldalecca, ne la Giudecca appresso 'l mare giallo [...]" 109). On the fantastic coordinates of the Lucianic satirical tradition, see Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins*, 181-210.

demise of Republican Siena is Vignali's *tour de force*. Critics have shown how each group, the Cazzi (big and little), Potte, Culi and Coglioni, is directly related to real political factions in Siena. The Cazzi refer to the Monte dei Nove, the most powerful, dominant and, hence, phallic bloc in the political arena of Siena. The distinction between big and little Cazzi refers to those who retained power (closely connected with the dominance of the Petrucci family) and those who were members of the Monte dei Nove but politically disenfranchised. The Coglioni represent the Gentiluomini, the oldest and most prestigious families who, nonetheless, were dependent on the Cazzi. The Culi are the Monte del Popolo and the Potte are the Riformatori, more recent, less powerful and, consequently, subservient in political and erotic hierarchies.²⁶ The tale is a thinly veiled retelling of the short-lived victory of communal government in Siena that, consequently, made *La Cazzaria* the "prototype of political pornography."²⁷

Arsiccio begins by stating that what he is about to recount derives from his readings of ancient and modern texts through which he has learned that violent tyrannical rule has never lasted long, nor been particularly profitable to those who sought it (Vignali, *La Cazzaria*, 94). Referring to the classical *topos* of the "body politic," the fable involves the arrogance of the big Cazzi and beautiful Potte in their dealings with the little Cazzi, the ugly Potte and the Culi. In short, the beauty and magnificence of the first group led them to believe that they could rule the body tyrannically without fear of retribution. What unfolds is a tale of war of titanic proportions, a kind of *giantomachy* of the genitals, or a *genitalomachy*, as it were. Basically, the big Cazzi grew in arrogance and daring and, consequently, alienated the ugly Potte. They, together with the little Cazzi, planned to overthrow this tyrannical rule and approached the Coglioni and Culi for support. Although initially in agreement, the Coglioni, who are pusillanimous by nature, betrayed the other genitals to the big Cazzi and this led to a slaughter of little Cazzi, ugly Potte, and Culi. Ultimately, despite the treachery of the Coglioni, the more numerous little Cazzi, ugly Potte and Culi prevailed, butchering almost all the big Cazzi and beautiful Potte. As a result, the number of big Cazzi and beautiful Potte was drastically reduced. There remained the question of suitable punishment for the Coglioni, who had been "the worst and truly malignant traitors" (152; "veri maligni e pessimi traditori," 123).

In the senate of the sex organs, many Cazzi, Potte, Coglioni and Culi expressed their views on an appropriate retribution. Vignali has the organs

²⁶Moulton in Vignali, *The Book of the Prick*, 33.

²⁷Findlen, "Humanism," 92.

employ in their various speeches stirring deliberative rhetoric. The power struggle between the organs is expressed primarily through the contrasting opinions of various factions within the Cazzi. Cazzatello, “a very honest, wise and moderate cock” (142; “un cazzo molto giusto, savio e riposato” 112), begins his oration with a balanced and soothing tone, referring to his audience as “Honorable brothers and sisters” (142; “fratelli e sorelle onorande” 112), and invoking the idea of justice and stable government over chaos. His words were particularly effective on the Culi:

ARSICCIO: [...] I culi parte sospiravano di compassione a le belle e affezionate parole di Cazzatello, a le quali erano si attenti a bocca aperta, che pareva che gli uscisse il fiato [...] (Vignali, *La Cazzeria*, 115).

(Arsiccio: [...] The Assholes, for their part, sighed with compassion at the beautiful and affectionate words of Cazzatello, to which they had listened with open-mouthed attention—it seemed that the wind had gone out of them. [Vignali, *The Book of the Prick*, 145])

A similar description of the reaction of the Culi and Potte follows Cazzo Albagio’s fiery condemnation of any sort of power sharing among the genitals. It elicited “a strong threatening shudder from the Assholes and the grinding of the lips of the Cunts” (147; “un rumore e un fremito altissimo del minacciare dei culi e de lo arrotare nei labbri de le potte” 118).

In the end, cool heads prevailed and calm was restored among the victorious Cazzi, Potte and Culi by means of a judicious sentence to be meted out to the traitorous Coglioni. In the interest of fairness, each Culo was paired with either a Cazzo or a Potta and the Coglioni were placed into sacks.²⁸ The Coglioni, fiercely hated by the other factions, were forever forbidden entry into either Culi or Potte whenever the Cazzi engaged in sexual activity. As eternal punishment for their crime, the Coglioni were thus to remain ineffectual witnesses to coital acts. This is another device that proves Vignali’s clever method of attuning classical antecedents to contemporary concerns. Through the shared etymology of “testimonio” and “testicolo,” the reference to the “testimonianza” of the Coglioni (128) harks back to the mnemonic image of the “testiculos arietinos” in the *Ad Herennium*, attributed to Cicero.²⁹ During the same period as the compo-

²⁸Moulton points out that this sentence was intended as an ironic parallel to the group of Gentiluomini whose families tended to live together in the same house (Vignali, *The Book of the Prick*, 33).

²⁹[Cicero], *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (III, xx,33; 215). See also Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 26-27.

sition of Vignal's dialogue, Aretino used this image to great erotic effect when he concluded the first of his *Sonetti lussuriosi* with the verses,

“E s’è possibil fore
Non mi tener la potta i coglioni
D’ogni piacer fottuto testimoni.”³⁰

(“And if it is possible / don’t keep your balls outside of my pussy / witnesses of every fucking pleasure.”)

In Vignal's dialogue, the reference to the Coglioni's punishment of eternally bearing witness carries with it the association of Ciceronian mnemotechnics, an essential part of a rhetorical tradition strongly associated with Republican ideals.³¹ Hence, the sexual, political and learned

³⁰Aretino, *Sonetti lussuriosi* in Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, 199. A further intriguing link may possibly be forged between Antonio Vignal, Pietro Aretino, and Antonio Rocco on the basis of this image. Of the four closing poems that accompany Rocco's *L'Alcibiade*, the first one concludes with the verses “But if, noble lord, you fuck in cunts / Your cock will rot by and by / And you will be called an Archdunce” (“ma se chiavate in potta, ser mastroni / vi marcirete il cazzo a l’otta a l’otta / e sarete chiamati arcicoglioni.”). Further parallels may be detected in the second poem where the verses “I know well that neither of my balls / Has experienced the surges of a cunt / But are lords of the *Culiseum*’s calls” (“Ben io lo so, ch’alcun de’ miei coglioni / di potta mai provaron li suoi guazzi / ma sol del culiseo li fei patroni”) seem to indicate Vignal's etymological study of the origins of the Roman coliseum, the “culiseo” (Vignal, *La Cazzaria*, 61). The verses “Must the most learned screw / (Listen please, it’s not right!) / Where brutish animals do?” (“Devon frotter adunque i più saputi / (sentite in cortesia, non sta già bene) / dove che fotton gl’animali bruti?”) of the third poem, and the references to “coglioneerie” (foolishness, though playing on the Italian usage of “coglione,” ball or testicle, as fool), “furberie” (wiliness), “ribalderie” (wickedness), and “ladrerie” (roguey) in poem four, are further enticements to seek possible links between these texts. As Laura Coci tells us in the “Note al testo,” these unidentified poems (Rocco, *L'Alcibiade*, 89-92), acknowledged merely as “Di M.V.”, may very well have been added to the original manuscript of *L'Alcibiade* sometime between 1630 and 1650 (Rocco, *L'Alcibiade*, 95). Nonetheless, they do seem to indicate a close reading of analogous, erotic, and uncanonical texts that extends the transgressive potential of Vignal's dialogue beyond the Cinquecento. The English renderings of the verses from the Italian poems are mine since the versions that appear in the English translation consulted (Rocco, *Alcibiades*, 97-100) differ significantly from the original in form and style. I thank Dr. Gerry Milligan for his helpful advice on the translations.

³¹Cox, “Ciceronian Rhetoric in Italy,” 239-288); Rebhorn, *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric*, 4.

threads of *La Cazzaria* are tightly bound together in one vivid *imago memoriae*.

After this last memorable image, the conversation veers toward a few final considerations regarding coital logistics before closing with a reference to the Cazzi, Potte, and Culi that have been left behind in their senate.

SODO Io ti prego, Arsiccio, che tu faccia fine di grazia, perché ho troppo sonno, né mai più durai tanta fatica a star desto quanto da un pezzo in qua che questa tua chiacchierata m'ha cominciato a rincrescere.

ARSIKKIO Tu hai ragione, Sodo; ma dimmi, vogliamo noi lasciare i cazzi e le potte e i culi nel senato ch'essi ancora non possano andare a dormire?

SODO None, ma caviamogli presto.

ARSIKKIO No, no, bada pure a dormire a tua posta. Lasciamoli pur stare, che potrebbono far questa notte qualche bella cosa, che ci darà material di chiacchierare doman da sera. Buonanotte (Vignali, *La Cazzeria*, 137).

(Sodo: I beg you, Arsiccio, finish up as soon as you can, because I'm very sleepy. I've never had so much trouble staying awake as in the last few minutes. Your chatter has begun to bore me.

Arsiccio: You're right, Sodo. But tell me, should we leave the Cocks, Cunts, and Assholes in their senate, so that they can't go to sleep as well?

Sodo: No, let's get them out quickly.

Arsiccio: No, no. You go off to bed now. Let's let them stay there; they may do some good thing tonight that will give us more to talk about tomorrow evening. Good night. [Vignali, *The Book of the Prick*, 164]).

The allusion to the late hour, the invitation to sleep and the hint at a resumption of the discussion the following day are the only references to time in the entire *Cazzaria*. It is a *topos* steeped in the dialogue tradition that Forno identifies as “the late hour,” one that precipitates a conclusion yet still maintains interest by pointing to the potential for further elaboration.³²

With the closing fable, Vignali offers the conclusive word on the topic broached at the beginning of the dialogue: the ability of the properly educated young man to engage in all manner of discussions. He has shown by example how to answer cleverly the question “why the balls never go either into the cunt or the asshole.” In his treatment of this salacious topic, he has shown his own virtuosity and inspired his pupil. He has led Sodo down the road of transformation in order to turn him into a well-rounded academic whose knowledge, both practical and theoretical, is appropriate to any

³²Forno, *Il “Libro animato”*, 297-301.

circumstance. The author has shrewdly borrowed from various traditions and produced an insightful work that shocks, destabilizes, entertains, and convinces. The mixture of practical experience, eclectic scholarship, and literary experimentation forms the hidden ways and means by which Antonio Vignali's *La Cazzaria* has earned a prominent place in the pantheon of pornography.

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LUCA CODIGNOLA

FRANCIS PARKMAN'S ROMAN EXPERIENCE (1844)

On 5 April 1844, the twenty-year old Francis Parkman (1823-93) wrote to his mother, Caroline Hall Parkman (1794-1871), from Rome.¹ He had been there for some six weeks and was about to leave for Florence. He had fallen under the charm of the Eternal City. "You may think two months a long time to remain in Rome, but it is not too much to see the place thoroughly—in fact, it is not half enough. I do not think the time could be more profitably spent."² He was careful to reassure her that his extended stay had nothing to do with a new penchant towards Roman Catholicism: "The farce of [Joseph] Coolidge Shaw has not been reenacted in my person." J.C. Shaw (1821-50 or 1851), as we shall see, was a cousin of the Parkmans and had recently converted, vainly trying to persuade Parkman to follow his example. "We are in the midst of the fooleries before the Holy Week," Parkman continued, going on to describe the weeks before Easter and the pagan rites performed by the superstitious faithful in their thousands.³

Almost 46 years later, a historian of great repute, Parkman was still using expressions of the kind to describe his days in Rome to a considerably wider public. That had proved a useful, first-hand introduction to the Catholic world he was afterwards to write about so extensively in his books, he explained. However, it had had no particular effect on his philosophical or religious convictions, despite the many positive aspects he was forced to acknowledge in so many members of the Catholic Church.⁴ One

¹A preliminary and shorter version of this article was published as Luca Codignola, "Francis Parkman. I giorni romani (18 febbraio-9 aprile 1844)," *Il Vetro. Rivista della Civiltà Italiana*, 38:3-4 (maggio-agosto 1994):163-184. The author wishes to thank James M. Muldoon for his most useful comments on the draft of this manuscript.

²Massachusetts Historical Society, Parkman Papers, Francis Parkman to Caroline Hall Parkman in Boston, Rome, 5 Apr. 1844; published in Parkman, *Letters*, 1:16-17. This was most probably Francis Parkman's answer to the objections contained in a letter, signed by his mother and father, Francis Parkman (1788-1852), that he had just received.

³Parkman, *Letters*, 1:16.

⁴Parkman, "Convent."

of Parkman's biographers, American historian Howard N. Doughty (1904-70), who carefully examined his four months in Italy, maintains that Parkman's Roman experience, though important, "was less direct in its bearings on what he was to do, and was not of a particularly dramatic cast,"⁵ an opinion on which American literary critic Jenny Franchot disagrees.⁶ American art historian William L. Vance too is not convinced of the truth of this image of basic uniformity in the "antagonistic attitude towards Catholics" which Parkman tries to give to himself. According to Vance, his days in Rome had a significant influence on his perception of Catholicism, despite his profoundly Protestant, Bostonian background.⁷

Everything we know about Parkman's stay in Rome comes from three printed sources, all of them his. The first to be published was the autobiographical article which appeared in the popular *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1890, three years before his death. After the publication of his journals, "A Convent in Rome" is chiefly interesting as an end-of-life interpretation of his visit to Catholicism's spiritual and political centre, although it contains additional information not given in the journals.⁸

The second source, the journals themselves, are of course by far the most important. During his European tour (16 November 1843-17 June 1844), Parkman kept a journal, written in ink in two thick notebooks. The first of these, with a leather spine and marbled-paper covers, contains the notes on his Rome visit. These journals were used by Parkman's earliest biographers, Charles Haught Farnham (1841-1929), his personal secretary, and by Henry Dwight Sedgwick (1861-1951).⁹ Both underestimated them and actually drew on them very little. To all intents the journals "dropped out of sight and out of memory" from 1904 to 1940, when the American historian Hugh Mason Wade (1913-86) rediscovered them in a drawer in Parkman's old house in Boston, at 50 Chestnut Street. Immediately after publishing his biography of Parkman, Wade edited the entire journals *corpus* (1943-46), publishing them in 1947. The weeks in Rome are documented in almost daily entries, with the exception of the period between 28 February and 23 March. Seemingly written at the end of his stay, the

⁵Doughty, *Parkman*, pp. 77-86, quotation at p. 78. Doughty, however, points out that, "in a lesser way," Parkman's Roman days were comparable to his sojourn among the Sioux.

⁶Franchot, *Roads*, p. 386 n. 59.

⁷Vance, *America*, 2:163.

⁸Parkman, "Convent."

⁹Farnham, *Life*; Sedgwick, *Parkman*.

account allows no precise reconstruction of the sequence of events, although the most significant facts and impressions are given sufficient space.¹⁰

The third source is the above-mentioned letter to Parkman's mother, dated 5 April 1844, published in 1960 in a selection of his letters edited by the American historian Wilbur R. Jacobs, Parkman's most recent biographer. His criteria for selection was based on "literary merit or ... significant information about his life, his work, or his times." Unfortunately for us, only the letter to his mother contains any reference to the time in Rome.¹¹

Parkman's biographers have used the above sources basically for a discussion of his Rome stay as a necessary part of his European *Grand Tour*, a common enough event for such young Americans as could afford the far-from-negligible travel costs.¹² His itinerary is familiar to cultural historians and literary critics researching the presence of Americans in Italy, above all in the nineteenth century. For the latter, however, Parkman is one of many, and their actual focus is on other figures in literary and art history, or in the history of diplomatic relations. No-one has hitherto examined the two months in Rome as anything beyond Parkman's own account of them, and yet it is a mistake to circumscribe them within the usual European *Grand Tour*. By examining them in detail, this article tries to assess how and to what extent they have helped to define his position towards Catholics and Catholicism as shown in his multi-volume series, "France and England in North America."¹³

Parkman was only nineteen when he informed his Harvard tutor Jared Sparks (1789-1866), the American historian and friend of his father's, that he intended to dedicate himself to research into the Seven Years' War.¹⁴ He soon afterwards extended his field to the North American conflict between France and England. To this end Parkman considered it necessary to "to paint the forest and its tenants in true and vivid colors" and "to realize a

¹⁰Wade, *Parkman*; Wade, ed., *Journals*, 1947. The portion relating to 28 February-23 March is 1:179-188.

¹¹Jacobs, *Parkman*; Parkman, *Letters*, 1: Ixi.

¹²Jacobs, *Parkman*, pp. 219-226, has the latest bibliography on Parkman, but omits Eccles, "Parkman," which came out roughly at the same time. Eccles, however, does not even mention Parkman's *Grand Tour*.

¹³All quotations from Parkman's works are from their latest two-volume edition (1983-91).

¹⁴Harvard College Library, Sparks Papers, Parkman to Jared Sparks, Cambridge, 28 April [1842]; published in Parkman, *Letters*, 1:9.

certain ideal of manhood, a little mediaeval.”¹⁵ To get to know the aboriginal peoples, Parkman went West along the Oregon Trail. To get to know the Middle Ages, Parkman went to Rome.¹⁶

As Parkman confessed in 1890, his attraction for “phenomena of religious enthusiasm, whether in its active or fossilized state” went hand in hand with “a fancy for mediaevalism,” and the desire “to get for a while out of the nineteenth century.”¹⁷ In fact, at the time of Parkman’s tour the Middle Ages were romanticized as the golden age of Catholicism—“intellectually and aesthetically alive, peace loving, charitable and honest.”¹⁸ In one of her letters from Rome to the *New-York Daily Tribune*, for example, American literary critic Margaret Fuller Ossoli (1810-50) described the white-cloaked Italian Risorgimento leader, Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-82), as the quintessential medieval hero.¹⁹ Garibaldi’s medieval image held on for many years: “The man who more than any man of our time has furnished modern Europe with a specimen of medieval romance has just died ... His match must be looked for among the Knights of the Round Table or the Twelve Peers of Charlemagne,” *The Nation* reported in 1882.²⁰ The Eternal City was then much more than a tourist attraction. It could provide Parkman with a vision of a Catholicism that was much different from that circulated in the United States, and especially in New England, in the 1830s and the 1840s. In those decades, when Parkman was a child and then young man, the xenophobia mainly directed at the large waves of migrants from Ireland found its most vocal expression in the anti-Catholic nativist propaganda, as witnessed by the 1834 fire that destroyed the Charlestown, Massachusetts, Ursuline school for girls and the Maria Monk hate literature.²¹ Quintessential, “medieval” Catholicism, as provided by

¹⁵ Massachusetts Historical Society, Parkman Papers, Parkam to Martin Brimmer, [Boston, 1886]; published in Sedgwick, *Parkman*, p. 329, and partially in Parkman, *Letters*, 1:184 nn. 1-6.

¹⁶ Parkman later explained: “I was led into a convent by the same motive that two years later led me to become domesticated in the lodges of the Sioux Indians at the Rocky Mountains” (Parkman, “Convent”, p. 450).

¹⁷ Parkman, “Convent”, p. 450.

¹⁸ Allitt, *Converts*, p. 44, also p. 45.

¹⁹ Fuller Ossoli, *New-York Daily Tribune* (11 August 1849).

²⁰ [Anon.], *The Nation*, 34 (June 1882), p. 477.

²¹ On 11 August 1834 a Protestant mob attacked the Ursuline Academy, a school for girls located in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and burned it down. As for Maria Monk, the fictional protagonist of *Awful Disclosures*, allegedly describing

Rome, would have allowed Parkman to examine at first hand the Catholicism which formed the mental backdrop to the French Canadians who had fought and had been defeated by the English Americans, a conflict whose story he wanted to tell.

* * * * *

On 17 February 1844, Parkman took the stage-coach and left Naples. He was accompanied by Theodore Parker (1810-60) and his wife, "a pretty, timid, gentle woman, ... full of curiosity to know everything."²² He had met the Parkers in Naples and they had tackled Vesuvius together.²³ Although only 34, Parker, a Unitarian minister from West Roxbury, Massachusetts, was already an established scholar and religious polemicist. He had recently published *A Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion* (1842). A year later Parker was to retire from the ministry to found a religious congregation in Boston. The journey to Rome took one day, one night, and part of the following day. To avoid worse problems, the group decided to waive its "rights as a traveller" and give handsome tips to the customs officers waiting for them at midnight on the border between the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Papal States.²⁴

On Sunday, 18 February the travellers awoke at dawn in the middle of the Pontine Marshes. Later they had their first glimpse of the Basilica of St. Peter's. All around, there were "remains of temples, aqueducts and tombs." Parkman wrote that Parker "became inspired," while his wife "studied every ruin ... in the guide book." Last of all, the Coliseum—and the hunt for a hotel. The city seethed with visitors and, Parkman recounts, a number of less fortunate English travellers had "walked the streets all night."²⁵ Exactly where Parkman and the Parkers stayed we do not know. Some time later Parkman said that his friends had taken up residence in Via del Babuino, one of the main roads in eighteenth-century Rome, between Piazza del Popolo and Piazza di Spagna. As for Parkman himself, his references to a "Hotel d'Allemagne" would point to his having stayed there for at least some part of his Rome stay.²⁶

the sexual debauchery of Catholic convents, see Reed, *Six Months*. See also Franchot, *Roads*, pp. xvii-xxi; Allitt, *Converts*, p. 24; Sylvain, "Affaire;" Schultz, *Fire*.

²²Parkman, *Journals*, 1:175.

²³Parkman, *Journals*, 1:167-168.

²⁴Parkman, *Journals*, 1:174.

²⁵Parkman, *Journals*, 1:174-175.

²⁶Parkman, *Journals*, 1:181; Parkman, "Convent," p. 449.

The reason for the presence of so many visitors was immediately clear: 18, 19, and 20 February were the three days of Carnival. In his journals Parkman dutifully and in detail describes the parades down the Via del Corso (“a most grand and solemn architecture”), the horse races, the game of the “moccoletti”, the theatre shows, and the masked balls.²⁷ “So much for my classic ‘first impressions’ of Rome!,” Parkman wrote, with unwonted irony.²⁸

After 21 February (Ash Wednesday), Parkman threw himself into a round of visits to “churches, convents, cemeteries, catacombs, common sewers … and ten thousand works of art” lasting at least until 26 February. Parkman had soon had enough and had no trouble admitting that he would “not give a damn for all the churches and ruins of Rome” if he could have “one ride on horseback among the Apenines [*sic*].”²⁹

In the meantime, Parkman had established contact with the American community in Rome. One first such contact was at the traditional party to celebrate George Washington’s birthday, on 22 February. “The Americans here must needs [*sic*] get up a dinner, with speeches, toasts, etc.,” Parkman wrote. “It was like a visit home.”³⁰ Some years previously, in 1830, the American writer James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) had also been at one of these parties, and had commented that his fellow countrymen were “vary patriotic, but quite moderate in [their] expression.” Comprising “near seventy” people in Cooper’s day, the community was now, according to Parkman, “a large number,” and composed of “artists and others.”³¹

The place of honour at the festivities went to General John Adams Dix (1798-1879), who presided over the lunch table. A veteran of the War of 1812, then editor of the literary and scientific journal *The Northern Light*, published in Albany, Dix was shortly to assume great prominence in the Democratic Party and was sent to Paris as a diplomat. Other important

²⁷ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:175-176.

²⁸ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:178.

²⁹ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:178-180.

³⁰ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:178. Parkman took this opportunity to contrast the British community, 4,000 “boisterous and haughty” people, to the American one, “very quiet and apparently timid.” On this contrast Parkman will often insist (see for example Parkman, *Journals*, 1:190, 198; Parkman, *Letters*, 1:17).

³¹ Cooper, *Excursions*, 2:172; Parkman, *Letters*, 1:17. According to Parkman, rumours which had 40,000 foreigners living in Rome were a gross exaggeration (Parkman, *Journals*, 1:197).

Americans present included George Washington Greene (1811-83), then the United States consul to the Holy See (1837-45) and afterwards a historian and university lecturer. Parkman got on particularly well with Greene. They met up in Liverpool, the last stage of Parkman's European tour, and travelled together on the *Acadia* back to North America.³² Also present at the festivities was Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-76), a philanthropist who later founded the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, with his wife, Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), the author of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, and one "Mr. Conrade," from Virginia, of whom nothing is known.³³ Colonel Winchester and his son William (Bill) were also in Rome at that period. Parkman met up with them in Liverpool and they formed part of the homeward-bound party on the *Acadia*.³⁴ When Parkman left Rome for Florence, he was accompanied by another young American, one Marquand, whom he afterwards re-encountered in Milan.³⁵

It was probably during the first half of March that Parkman came, quite unexpectedly, across two more Americans, William Morris Hunt (1824-79) and his brother, John Hunt.³⁶ W.M. Hunt had been at Harvard University with him, before being sent down for poor results. His family had brought him to Italy to study painting and sculpture. When Parkman met him he was studying under the American sculptor Henry Kirke Brown (1814-86). He was later to become a well-known artist in Boston. The two of them decided to set off on a seven-day tour of the Roman Castelli, the volcanic lakes and wine-growing area to the south-east of Rome, modulating from soft hills to rough mountains. This is described in detail in Parkman's journals and needs no repetition here. It is sufficient to add that the Parkers and J. Hunt accompanied Parkman and W.M. Hunt as far as Tivoli, before leaving them in the company of one Giuseppe to go on to San Cosimato, Subiaco, Lake Albano, Rocca di Santo Stefano, Civitella, Cara, and Velletri.³⁷ On a second, three-day trip to the Castelli (26-28

³²Parkman, *Journals*, 1:178, 232, 234-235; Parkman, "Convent", p. 451.

³³For a description of the festivities and the names of some of those who attended them, see Parkman, *Journals*, 1:178.

³⁴Parkman, *Letters*, 1:16; Parkman, *Journals*, 1:231-234.

³⁵Parkman, *Journals*, 1:199, 207-208.

³⁶Parkman, *Journals*, 1:181.

³⁷Parkman, *Journals*, 1:182-188; Parkman, "Convent", pp. 450, 458. According to Jacobs, who does not disclose his source, W.M. Hunt took part in this tour with his mother and sister, whereas his brother, J. Hunt, is not mentioned in this regard (Parkman, *Letters*, 1:17 n. 2). Civitella and Cara were not identified by this writer.

March), Parkman visited Albano, Rocca di Papa and Lake Nemi, this time unaccompanied.³⁸

Between trips, Parkman spent at least two days in the city, 24 (a Sunday) and 25 March. On the Sunday afternoon he went to high mass in St. Peter's. He was singularly struck by the numbers present ("several thousand people"), by the hundreds of lighted candles, and by the halberdiers of the Swiss Guard.³⁹ Passion Sunday, the last Sunday before Easter, is of considerable importance in the Roman Catholic church. The pope himself, Gregory XVI (Bartolomeo Alberto Cappellari, better known as fra' Mauro, 1765-1846), was present at the mass, celebrated by Charles Michael Baggs (d.1845), the bishop of Pella, vicar apostolic in the Western District of England and assistant to the papal throne. The sermon was preached, in Latin, by Alduino Patscheider, the Procurator General of the Servants of Mary.⁴⁰

* * * *

Another young "innocent abroad" who certainly did not take part in the Washington celebrations was Ignace St. Ives (b.c.1817),⁴¹ who, with the Jesuit Thomas Glover (*fl.*1807-55), was the person most to influence Parkman during his stay in Rome. Little is known of the relations between Parkman and Glover, a scholar of repute who had represented the English provinces both in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Papal States. Parkman himself mentions him only once,⁴² and never in his journals. Yet they must have met shortly after Parkman's arrival in Rome, probably between 19 and 23 February, and it is quite clear that any general mention of the Jesuits, both in his journals and in his 1890 article, "A Convent in Rome," is made with Glover in mind. They had frequent conversations, and Glover gave Parkman a number of books to read.⁴³ "It is ... startling to a 'son of Harvard,'" Parkman wrote while in Rome, "to see the astounding

³⁸Parkman, *Journals*, 1:188-190.

³⁹Parkman, *Journals*, 1:188.

⁴⁰*Diario di Roma*, 25 (26 March 1844).

⁴¹St. Ives's name is variously mentioned with the initials "J" (Parkman) or "I" only. His name appears in full only in a document preserved in Archivio Generale della Congregazione dei Passionisti, Registro de' Signori Esercitanti che si ricevono in questo ritiro de' SS. Giovanni e Paolo Dall'Anno 1833, al 1853, ff. 344v-345r, no. 153.

⁴²Parkman, "Convent", p. 454.

⁴³Parkman, "Convent", p. 450.

learning of these Jesuit fathers [i.e., Glover], and the appalling readiness and rapidity with [which] they pour forth their interminable streams of argument" and put to good use the "heavy batteries of learning and logic."⁴⁴ In fact, in spite of their being on the wrong side of history, Parkman admired the Jesuits as individuals who were both learned and unflinchingly devoted to their cause. One of his books, *The Jesuits in North America*, was entirely devoted to the depiction of their virtues, which "shine amidst the rubbish of error, like diamonds and gold in the gravel of the torrent."⁴⁵ One wonders whether he also saw in them some of the moral and physical strength that he employed in battling against the crippling disease that accompanied him throughout his life.

Glover had been introduced to Parkman by St. Ives, an obscure eighteen-year-old probably from the American South⁴⁶ and a recent convert to Catholicism, a relative of the Episcopalian bishop L. St. Ives. Parkman took an immediate dislike to St. Ives. They met at the Parkers' residence, and St. Ives "presently undertook" his fellow countryman's conversion.⁴⁷ They apparently continued to meet during Parkman's stay in Rome, despite St. Ives's decision, on 27 February, to stop any attempts at conversion because he was "disgust[ed]" by the absence in Parkman of "logic enough ... to be convinced of anything."⁴⁸ Many years later, in "A Convent in Rome," Parkman recalled his extreme dislike of his neo-convert fellow countryman's company. "His whole look inspired distrust." He was arrogant, revelled in boasting of his sinful and dissolute former life, loathed democracy, and was "fiercely arbitrary and domineering," although he was humility itself "toward those in high places." Parkman found him, in a word, a

⁴⁴ Parkman, "Convent," 434; Parkman, *Journals*, 1:180. The relations between Glover and the English Jesuits are mentioned in Basset, *Jesuits*, pp.373, 429; and Edwards, *Jesuits*, pp.143, 170, 317.

⁴⁵ Parkman, *Jesuits*, 1:712. On Parkman's overall view of the Jesuits, see the perceptive remarks in Franchot, *Roads*, pp. 64, 80.

⁴⁶ Archivio Generale della Congregazione dei Passionisti, Registro de' Signori Esercitanti che si ricevono in questo ritiro de' SS. Giovanni e Paolo Dall'Anno 1833, al 1853, ff. 344v-345r, no. 153, gives New York as St. Ives's place of provenance, but this could simply be his last address. Parkman, an American citizen himself, is more reliable. He defines St. Ives a "Virginian" in his journals and "born in one of the Southern States" in 1890 (Parkman, *Journals*, 1:179; Parkman, "Convent", p. 450). In another document there is a reference to his activities in Philadelphia (see note 68).

⁴⁷ Parkman, "Convent", p. 450.

⁴⁸ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:179.

“hypocrite and liar,” “one of those to whom the imposing spectacle of organized power in the Roman Church appeals with irresistible fascination.”⁴⁹

At the same time, St. Ives was a man of considerable resources. He not only introduced Glover to Parkman⁵⁰ and to Father Luca, director of the spiritual retreat which, as we shall see, took place in the convent of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, on the Celio, but was also under the protection of the powerful Charles Januarius Edward Cardinal Acton (1803-47). The latter, who was General Auditor of the Apostolic Chamber, financed St. Ives when he entered the convent on 4 June 1843 to begin his spiritual retreat. St. Ives had already converted to Catholicism and had abjured his former faith, as Father Luca well recalled some time later.⁵¹ It was Acton who wrote to Giacomo Filippo Cardinal Fransoni (1775-1856), then Prefect of the Sacred Congregation “de Propaganda Fide,” five weeks after Parkman’s departure from Rome, towards the middle of March, requesting a place for St. Ives in Propaganda Fide’s Collegio Urbano, the college in Piazza di Spagna which trained young non-Italians destined to return to their native countries as missionaries.⁵²

St. Ives also had the advantages of a “keen intellect” and a “remarkably vivid imagination.” If he did not manage to sway Parkman, he certainly exercised a profound influence over others, not least J.C. Shaw, Parkman’s cousin and brother of Quincy Adams Shaw (d.1908), who was shortly to accompany Parkman along the Oregon Trail. J.C. Shaw was reading law at Cambridge, but had met St. Ives on a visit to Rome shortly before Parkman’s, and had been converted to Catholicism.⁵³

⁴⁹Parkman, “Convent”, p. 450; Parkman, *Letters*, 1:16. One must note that Parkman hated democratic society as much as St. Ives, at least after his Oregon Trail journey.

⁵⁰Both Parkman and Parker suspected that the Jesuits (that is, Glover) and the other ecclesiastics used St. Ives, whom they did not trust, in order to obtain the conversion of others.

⁵¹Father Luca “seemed surprised and startled at hearing that I was a Protestant, but presently, with a benignant smile, expressed a hope that I should be reclaimed from my errors, saying that another American had been there before me and happily found grace to see the truth. This was my acquaintance J— [St. Ives]” (Parkman, “Convent”, p. 452).

⁵²This writer has found not Acton’s letter, but the copy of Fransoni’s affirmative answer in Archivio della Sacra Congregazione “de Propaganda Fide,” *Lettore*, vol. 331, f. 354rv, [Fransoni] to Acton, [Rome], 17 May 1844. To be admitted to Collegio Urbano was rather difficult.

⁵³Parkman, “Convent”, pp. 449-450. “Ah! I hope you will follow in your good

This “farce” of his cousin J.C. Shaw’s, as Parkman described it in the letter to his mother,⁵⁴ was to develop into a total and lasting conviction. On 30 April 1844, when Parkman had left Rome, J.C. Shaw sent St. Ives a copy of the long review, by the philosopher Orestes Augustus Brownson (1803-76), then editor of the *Boston Quarterly Review*, of Parker’s most recent book, *Discourse of Religion*, speculating on Brownson’s conversion to Catholicism with the enthusiasm of the conviction of the neophyte.⁵⁵ Some months later, on 14 August, J.C. Shaw announced to his friend in Rome his intention of becoming a priest. His circle of friends was the same as Parkman’s and St. Ives’s—Cardinal Acton, Glover the Jesuit, one Dr. Grant, and, in England, a bishop, probably Thomas Griffiths (1791-1847), bishop of Olena and vicar apostolic in the London District. His long letter denotes the strong religious enthusiasm rapidly sweeping through certain circles of American youth—people like J.C. Shaw, St. Ives, the young Virginian McIntosh, a colleague of J.C. Shaw’s who had recently returned to the United States ready to take on the opposition of his mother, “a rigid Presbyterian.” J.C. Shaw, like McIntosh, was profoundly disturbed by the idea of having to choose between his new faith and his strong affection for his father, who had told him that “Catholicity was only for the slaves” and that “the tour of the West, &c” (which his brother Q.A. Shaw was to go on shortly afterwards) should blow the Catholic cobwebs away.⁵⁶ But these young men were all part of a movement that was by no means a minor one.⁵⁷ During the central decades of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of English and American Protestants converted to

cousin’s path,” St. Ives had said when Parkman was introduced to him (“Convent”, p. 449).

⁵⁴Parkman, *Letters*, 1:16.

⁵⁵Archivio della Sacra Congregazione “de Propaganda Fide,” Congressi, America Centrale, vol. 13, ff. 571r-641v, J.C. Shaw to St. Ives, Cambridge, 30 April 1844. A similar comment on Brownson in *ibid.*, ff. 1183r-1185v, J.C. Shaw to St. Ives, care of Acton, Savin Hill, 14 August 1844.

⁵⁶Archivio della Sacra Congregazione “de Propaganda Fide,” Congressi, America Centrale, vol. 13, ff. 1183r-1185v, J.C. Shaw to St. Ives, care of Acton, Savin Hill, 14 August 1844. On the importance of family networks on the conversion process, see Rose, “Roads.”

⁵⁷This movement has recently been examined by a number of important studies. See Franchot, *Roads* (with a long section on Parkman, pp. 62-82), focussing on Protestant ambivalence towards Catholicism; Allitt, *Converts*, emphasizing intellectual motives; and Rose, “Roads,” on the role of family networks.

Catholicism, as many as 350,000 to 700,000.⁵⁸ Furthermore, according to American historian Patrick Allitt, “nearly all the major Catholic intellectuals writing in English between 1840 and 1960 were converts to Catholicism” and maintained “extensive transatlantic contacts.”⁵⁹

In spite of J.C. Shaw’s hopes and all Glover’s and St. Ives’s attempts, Parkman showed no external sign of any inner conflict which might have been shaking the foundations of his long-standing Unitarianism.⁶⁰ J.C. Shaw’s example aside, there was little doubt that Cooper’s pronouncement that “one of the last things that an American would be likely to suspect, is the conversion of his countrymen to the Roman Catholic faith.”⁶¹ This would especially apply to Parkman, a member of the Boston aristocracy, with “his rather dyspeptic attitude towards races, nationalities, religions, and social classes other than his own,” as described by one of his most outspoken critic, historian Francis Jennings (1918-2000).⁶² St. Ives had given up his attempts. J.C. Shaw, who had met Parkman during his Rome stay, wrote to St. Ives that, after the latter’s words to him, he “had hoped to greet [Parkman] as a new brother,” but had realised that “on the contrary, his prejudices [we]re very strong.”⁶³

In actual fact, Rome was taking quiet if invisible hold of Parkman. Shortly before Sunday, 24 March, he admitted to himself “that a place on every account more interesting — and which has a more vivifying and quickening influence on the faculties — could not be found on the face of the earth.” In later life he was still more explicit about his wavering over Catholicism: “I had some slight suspicion that the exclusive claims of Rome might not be without foundation after all.” About a year later, however, J.C. Shaw gave him a book which he defined the last word against heresy. This was *The End of Religious Controversy*, by John M. Milner (1752-1826), formerly bishop of Castabala and apostolic vicar in the English Midland District, a prolific and controversial, if otherwise uninspiring, author. It was enough, however, to confirm Parkman in his origi-

⁵⁸Ahlstrom, *History*, p. 548; Bochen, *Narratives*, 1980, p. 57. See also Rose, “Roads,” p. 36 n. 1; Franchot, *Roads*, p. 281.

⁵⁹Allitt, *Converts*, pp. ix, 1.

⁶⁰Later, Parkman tended towards agnosticism in religion.

⁶¹Cooper, *Excursions*, 2:172.

⁶²Jennings, “Parkman,” p. 320.

⁶³Archivio della Sacra Congregazione “de Propaganda Fide,” Congressi, America Centrale, vol. 13, ff. 1183r-1185v, J.C. Shaw to St. Ives, care of Acton, Savin Hill, 14 August 1844.

nal convictions, and he had “remained ever since in solid unbelief as to the doctrines of Rome.”⁶⁴ A few years later he was to put into the mouth of Vassall Morton, the main protagonist of one of his short stories, published in 1856, what Jacobs, Parkman’s latest biographer, considers the most succinct synthesis of his position as regards Catholicism: “I was born and bred among Protestants. I respect your ancient church for the good she has done in ages past, and for the good men who have held her faith; but I do not believe in her doctrine, nor approve of her practice.”⁶⁵

As we know, the “farce” of his cousin J.C. Shaw’s conversion was to continue in the face of his family’s initial disapproval, even though J.C. Shaw was to die six years later, in 1850 or 1851, without having finished his studies, and thus unordained.⁶⁶ Of the destiny of his friend McIntosh we know nothing. Research in the Rome archives has, however, thrown up some interesting facts about St. Ives. After being admitted to Propaganda Fide’s Collegio Urbano in May 1844, as we saw above, St. Ives was very soon removed, on account of a clear and total lack of vocation. Shortly afterwards, at the intercession of Karl Augustus von Reisach (1800-69), rector of the Collegio Urbano and at the time bishop of Eichstatt and coadjutor of the bishop of Munich and Friesing, St. Ives was sent to Munich, Bavaria, to stay with “a distinguished and zealous” local ecclesiastic. However, the nuncio in Munich, Michele Viale Prelà (1798-1860), bishop of Carthage, had not the slightest intention of concerning himself with him, far less keeping him, so on 29 May 1845 Propaganda Fide wrote both to Viale Prelà and to Acton, St. Ives’s patron, suggesting that St. Ives find himself gainful employment, since he had no right to church subsidy. If he particularly wished, Propaganda Fide’s letters went on, he could return to the United States and ask a bishop to admit him to a seminary and re-examine his vocational aptitude.⁶⁷ Worse was to come. On 12

⁶⁴Parkman, *Journals*, 1:180; Parkman, “Convent”, p. 450. Parkman implicitly mentioned Milner’s treatise as “Mills’s End of Controversy” (“if I rightly remember” [“Convent”, p. 450]). This was [Milner], *End* (1818), later often republished. The Anglican Bishop of St. David’s was Thomas Burgess (1756-1837).

⁶⁵Parkman, *Morton*, p. 198. Jacobs deals with Parkman’s position with regard to Catholicism in Jacobs, *Parkman*, pp. 137-142.

⁶⁶Parkman, *Letters*, 1:18 n. 4.

⁶⁷Archivio della Sacra Congregazione “de Propaganda Fide,” *Lettere*, vol. 332, f. 344rv, Giovanni Brunelli (1795-1861), Bishop of Thessalonica and Secretary of Propaganda Fide, to Acton, [Rome], 20 May 1845; *ibid.*, f. 324rv, [Fransoni] to Michele Viale Prelà, Archbishop of Carthage, Nuncio in Munich, [Rome], 29 May 1845.

January 1846, Francis Patrick Kenrick (1797-1863), bishop of Arathia and administrator of the diocese of Philadelphia, informed Rome of his total opposition to St. Ives's ordination, given the acts of fraud committed both in Philadelphia and in England.⁶⁸ What became of him thereafter is so far not known.⁶⁹

* * * * *

His Rome stay was coming to an end, and Parkman had already decided not to leave without trying out the monastic life. Here his academic interest in a return to the Middle Ages, which would have inclined more towards castles than convents, was probably proceeding in parallel with a more personal curiosity in a religion he had hitherto met primarily through the written word. Parkman needed a "clear impression of monastic life, and of Roman Catholic ecclesiasticism in general." Both in Sicily and during the two visits to the Roman Castelli, he had made a point of visiting all the convents he came across.⁷⁰ At the Franciscan convent of San Cosimato, on the tip of a 341-metre-high hill, on a sheer precipice overlooking the Aniene River, Parkman had witnessed the "admirable example of courage and enthusiasm" of the friars living in such a dangerous spot. Parkman

⁶⁸ Collegio Irlandese, Rome, American Papers, 1829-49, no. 106, Kenrick to Paul Cullen, Rector of the Collegio Irlandese, Philadelphia, 12 January 1846; excerpts in *ibid.*, no. 1139. The letter does not clarify it, and we do not know whether St. Ives committed the acts of fraud of which he was accused prior to his departure for the United States, or, as it is more probable, after his return to the United States in the second half of 1845. Cullen (1803-78) was appointed cardinal in 1866.

⁶⁹ The unpublished details of the life of St. Ives would suggest that historians need to extend their research beyond Parkman's interpretation of his Rome stay to the various people he relegates to the background, acting out the roles he himself assigns them. Some of these figures are not unknown to history, and their papers might well offer new perspectives on Parkman himself. It would seem unlikely, for example, that the Jesuit Glover has nowhere recorded his impressions of his meetings with Parkman and St. Ives, and some evidence must surely transpire from Greene, the consul, the philosopher Parker, General Dix, Howe, the philanthropist, W.M. Hunt, the artist, the whole Shaw family, and St. Ives's relationship with his relative, the Episcopalian bishop, L. St. Ives. Above all the whole of Parkman's unpublished correspondence should be re-examined. As for Cardinal Acton, a preliminary search in the Acton papers, for which I am grateful to Giovanni Pizzorusso and Matteo Sanfilippo, has led nowhere (see Archivio Segreto Vaticano, *Spogli dei Cardinali*, Acton, vols. 1-7).

⁷⁰ Parkman, "Convent", p. 450.

wanted to accept the Franciscans' hospitality, but W.M. Hunt demurred.⁷¹ Near Subiaco, they came across a Benedictine convent which seemed particularly to fit Parkman's medieval bill. "Full of relics of the middle ages," it seemed "doomed to speedy destruction." Parkman "was under strong temptation to beg the fathers to let [him] stay... a few days," but once again the impulse was unrealized.⁷² On 27 March he asked to be admitted to a convent of the Order of the Passionists at Rocca di Papa. "[A]lone on the rocky side of the mountain,"⁷³ its interior was "the gloomiest and darkest I have seen"—and thus an ideal setting for the young Bostonian. The superior, however, refused hospitality, insisting he had first to clear it with his superior in Rome.⁷⁴ Once back in Rome, on 28 March, Parkman tried once more at a convent of the Capuchin friars, but this time the answer came "peremptorily".⁷⁵

In a last-ditch attempt he knocked at the door of the Passionist convent of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, "just beyond the Coliseum."⁷⁶ This time he was luckier. A friar told him to return in the afternoon, when he would find a room ready. Parkman ran off to tell the Parkers, in Via del Babuino, and, at T. Parker's warnings of the danger of a still-flourishing Sacred Roman and Universal Inquisition, he asked him to inform Greene, the

⁷¹Parkman, *Journals*, 1:183. In describing those days Parkman makes a number of mistakes. The convent is spelled "San Cosinato," the river becomes the "Anio", and the Franciscans are transformed into Benedictines. These mistakes are repeated by all of Parkman's biographers.

⁷²Parkman, *Journals*, 1:185.

⁷³In actual fact, the convent, built in 1783, is on the top of Monte Cavo (m 949), the second-tallest hill of Colli Albani, at about an hour walk from Rocca di Papa (m 681).

⁷⁴Parkman, *Journals*, 1:188-190.

⁷⁵Parkman, *Journals*, 1:190. Parkman's strong words against the Capuchins, written in 1890 ("the dealings of that ghastly brotherhood were with the dead and not the living" [Parkman, "Convent", p. 450]), were probably the result of further reflection, because there is no trace of that kind of attitude in the journals.

⁷⁶Parkman, "Convent", p. 451. For almost contemporary illustrations of the Passionist convent, see Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781-1835), "Veduta del Colle Celio, presa dal Palatino," 1825, published in Rossetti, *Roma*, p. 172; and in *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, 6 (1980), p. 1238; George Belron Moore (1805-75), "San Giovanni e Paolo," [undated], published in *Roma nelle stampe*, p. 93; and Karl August Lindemann-Frommel (1819-91), "SS. Giovanni e Paolo," 1846, published in *Roma nelle stampe*, pp. 90-91.

consul, should he not be back by Palm Sunday, four days later.⁷⁷ Parkman had been sent to the Passionists and Father Luca by St. Ives.⁷⁸ In Parkman's opinion, the Passionists were "the strictest of the orders of monks—wear hair-cloth next to the skin—lash their backs with 'disciplines' made of little iron chains, and mortify the flesh in various other similar ways."⁷⁹ Entry to the convent was problem-free. It regularly took in lay persons for short-term spiritual retreats, and some thirty Italians were then resident.⁸⁰ Nor did the fact of Parkman's Protestantism prove a problem. Father Luca seemed "startled" when, at their first meeting, he discovered Parkman was a heretic,⁸¹ a sure indication that no-one had thought fit to inform him of the fact. 28 March was Parkman's first day in the convent. A notice on the walls of his cell forbade, among other things, distracting oneself by looking out of the window. After noting down his impressions in his journals, Parkman pushed his chair to the window to look at the Coliseum, "with Rome behind it—gardens in front, and endless ruins—arches—columns—walls—and fountains—around." Hundreds of bells were ringing, and the dome of St. Peter's was "red in the light of the setting sun." The sky was clear and the temperature had dropped to $C8$ or $C9$ degrees, after the mild $C15$ of noon.⁸²

Parkman has left no precise notes of the people he met during his time at the convent. He certainly spent considerable time with Father Luca, "plump and well-fed, with a double-chin like a bull-frog," significantly at variance with the "dry, leathery visages of the monks." In actual fact Father

⁷⁷ Parkman, "Convent", p. 451; Parkman, *Journals*, 1:190.

⁷⁸ Parkman, "Convent", p. 451.

⁷⁹ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:188. Similar descriptions are in Parkman, *Letters*, 1:16; Parkman, "Convent", p. 451.

⁸⁰ Parkman, "Convent", p. 451; Parkman, *Journals*, 1:190-191, 195.

⁸¹ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:191; Parkman, "Convent", p. 452. That Parkman did not raise any special interest seems to be proved by the fact that no official document of the convent mentions his name or his presence. It must be also said, however, that the first volume of the official register of the convent, in which all important facts relating to the convent were duly noted, has been missing for decades. Only the second volume, which does not include 1844, is still extant (Archivio Generale della Congregazione dei Passionisti, Platea di questo Ritiro de' SS. Gio: e Paolo in cui si descrivono le notizie spettanti al sud.to incominciando dall'Anno 1830. Volume 2).

⁸² Parkman, *Journals*, 1:191; Parkman, "Convent", p. 451; *Diario di Roma*, 26 (30 March 1844).

Luca was not a Passionist, but a secular priest who was staying temporarily at the convent to oversee the lay retreats. He was in some hope of a speedy conversion of the young American who at some point had obviously been entrusted to him, and when Parkman left, still an “unbeliever”, he took “the kindest leave of [him]” and gave him a “book of Catholic devotion” which his pupil promised to keep “in remembrance of a very excellent man.”⁸³ On 29 March the General of the Order, Antonio Testa (1787-1862), known in religion as Antonio di San Giacomo, “a tall, portly man with a stern and austere countenance,” visited the convent, but neither Parkman nor the superior mentioned having met him.⁸⁴ Both in his journals and in his 1890 article Parkman mentions a number of other Passionists, but gives no names. They tried in various ways to convince him of his heresy, although Parkman comments that none of them was as adept “at argument, or sophistry, as the Jesuits.” As for the lay Italians taking part, they were friendly and welcoming: “There is nothing gloomy or morose in the religion of these Italians here; no camp-meeting long faces.”⁸⁵

There is no need, here, to go into the details of Parkman’s four days in the convent of Santi Giovanni e Paolo (28-31 March), as he has exhaustive accounts in both the journals and in “A Convent in Rome.”⁸⁶ It is worth noting, however, that he gives more a sequence of impressions than of events. It was indeed impressions, not facts, that the future Boston historian wanted. But he had soon had enough of it, and on Sunday morning, 31 March, he left, apparently in some hurry, the convent’s “gloomy galleries and cells.” He “got into the fresh air,” jumped on a cab, and went to the Parkers in Via del Babuino. After a relatively cool night, the temperature was moving towards *C12* degrees. It was Palm Sunday, the beginning of the

⁸³Parkman, *Journals*, 1:193, 195; Parkman, “Convent”, pp. 452-453. Father Luca’s name does seem to be in any of the documents preserved in Archivio Generale della Congregazione dei Passionisti. The only Luca of this period seems to be Giovanni Luca Sofia, known in religion as Giovanni Luca dell’Assunzione (1764-1850), formerly Consultor General (1821-27) and Procurator (1815-21, 1827-31), but he was certainly not the Father Luca in question.

⁸⁴Parkman, “Convent”, pp. 452-453; Parkman, *Journals*, 1:192. Testa was general of the Passionists from 1839 to 1862. See *Superiores Generales cum suis consiliis ordine chronologico relati* (1747-1982), Rome: Segretariato Generale dei PP. Passionisti, 1983.

⁸⁵Parkman, *Journals*, 1:192-193.

⁸⁶See also Parkman’s direct reference to his Passionist convent experience in Parkman, *Jesuits*, 1:475 n. 2.

Holy Week. The “motley crowds and gorgeous ceremonial” awaited the American visitors.⁸⁷

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The Sunday celebrations were inaugurated and presided over by Gregory XVI, who blessed the crowd, gave out olive sprigs in memory of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and took part in the solemn procession leading to St. Peter’s. The pope was accompanied by dozens of cardinals, archbishops, and bishops. Parkman’s journals note the impressive figure of the pope, “seated on a species of canopied throne borne on the shoulders of men, with his Swiss guard round him, one of whom bore a sword whose blade—six feet long—represented flames of fire.” Inside the basilica, mass was celebrated by Niccolò Clarelli Paracciani (1799-1872), a Curia man and the most recently appointed cardinal (22 January 1844).⁸⁸ At ten o’clock that evening, a similar procession accompanied the High Penitentiary, Castruccio Cardinal Castracane degli Antelminelli (1799-1852), to the Basilica of St. John Lateran, where the prelate began the pre-Easter confessions which took place in each of the major Roman basilicas in turn.⁸⁹ We have no idea whether Parkman was present and know nothing of his movements over the next two days (1-2 April). According to the periodical *Diario di Roma*, which appeared twice a week and zealously gave news of any event occurring in the city, nothing of any significance went on at that time.

Parkman returned to St. Peter’s on 3 April, when the Tenebrae Matins were sung in the Sistine Chapel,⁹⁰ and again on 4 April, when he was laughing and cursing, jostling and being jostled in the crowd of thousands trying to catch a glimpse of the day’s ceremonies. Firstly, high mass in the Sistine Chapel, attended by Gregory XVI and celebrated by Luigi Cardinal Lambruschini (1776-1854), who, as Secretary of State and Secretary of Briefs, was the highest official in the Roman Curia. Then there followed the procession to the Cappella Paolina, where the consecrated host “was placed in the midst of the high altar in the midst of a thousand candles”

⁸⁷ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:195; Parkman, “Convent”, p. 454; *Diario di Roma*, 27 (2 April 1844).

⁸⁸ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:193; *Diario di Roma*, 27 (2 April 1844).

⁸⁹ *Diario di Roma*, 27 (2 April 1844).

⁹⁰ *Diario di Roma*, 28 (6 April 1844); Parkman, *Journals*, 1:193. Parkman erroneously refers to the Cappella del Coro, a chapel within St. Peter’s basilica, not to the Sistine Chapel.

and worshipped by the faithful. The pope was then “borne ... on the shoulders of men to the window of the Loggia,” whence he blessed the crowd while a cardinal cursed “Jews, heretics, etc.” All present, Parkman notes, removed “their hats, and most of the heretics imit[ed] them, in ignorance of the compliment they were receiving.” Lastly, in the Baptistry of St. Peter’s, Gregory XVI washed the feet of thirteen pilgrims in white robes (actually priests representing pilgrims, Parkman adds) and served them with food in the Loggia. It seemed to him that all the Italians present “regard[ed] the affair as an amusement,” while manifesting no particular reverence.⁹¹

St. Peter’s was the focus of the main events of Catholic ritual. Good Friday (5 April) was a special day in the Holy Week, Parkman explains, when the Resurrection is celebrated “by anticipation.” The pope proceeded to the Sistine Chapel where Cardinal Castracane degli Antelminelli celebrated mass and Giovanni Battista Marrocù, professor of theology at the local Università della Sapienza and definitor of the Conventual Franciscans, gave an “eloquent and moving” sermon in Latin. Parkman observed some of the ceremonies in St. Peter’s from the door of the Cappella del Coro. What particularly struck him was the sudden change from the “dismal and lugubrious tone” of the chants, and the “wretched and disconsolate” attitude of the clergy, to an atmosphere of ecstatic worship at the sound of the bells and cannon shots coming from Castel Sant’Angelo. An acquaintance of Parkman’s, one Mancinelli, who he had bumped into in St. Peter’s, explained that the “damn fools” were so ecstatic because, by removing the purple drape covering the image of Christ, they imagined they had witnessed his resurrection.⁹²

Two events took place on Holy Saturday (6 April) which Parkman fails to mention in his journals. The first was another high mass in the Sistine Chapel, this time celebrated by Cardinal Fransoni in the presence of the

⁹¹Parkman, *Journals*, 1:196-198; *Diario di Roma*, 28 (6 April 1844). The Cappella dei Santi Processo e Martiniano, mentioned in *Diario di Roma*, is now better known as the Baptistry. In the letter to his mother, Parkman refers to the ceremony of the washing of the feet as if this had happened on 6 April, not on 4 April. A similar episode in Parkman, *Journals*, 1:208-209.

⁹²Parkman, *Journals*, 1:198; *Diario di Roma*, 27 (2 April 1844). Mancinelli is mentioned twice in the journals, but no further information is provided on him. He spoke English, and Parkman seemed to use him as a sort of Roman assistant. The dismissive way in which he mentions Mancinelli could indicate that his presence did not need to be registered in a journal because he was a regular presence and could not be forgotten.

pope.⁹³ The second was the publicly celebrated baptism and confirmation of two former Jews, the twenty-two-year old Eichim Goldenberg, from “Unghwchevarre”, who was given the name of Francesco Maria Paolo, and the nineteen-year-old Giacobbe Forti, from Siena, rebaptized Gaspare Maria Amato. The ceremony was performed by Costantino Cardinal Patrizi Naro (1798-1876), Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Residence of Bishops, and took place in the Basilica of the St. John Lateran before a large crowd of visitors, both “foreign and national.”⁹⁴

Easter Sunday (7 April) was of course the culmination of the events of the Holy Week. High mass was celebrated by the pope himself, assisted by dozens of cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, including Cardinal Lambruschini; Adriano Cardinal Fieschi (1788-1858), Prefect of the Apostolic Palace; Tommaso Cardinal Riario Sforza (1782-1857), Camerlengo di Santa Romana Chiesa, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars; and Ludovico Cardinal Gazzoli (1774-1858), Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Good Government.⁹⁵ Parkman avoided the tedious repetition of ceremonies already described in detail in previous days’ journal entries, simply noting that the pope had “a second time” blessed “a huge army” which had gathered in front of St. Peter’s. He had, however, been fascinated by the “myriads of candles” illuminating the cold night and the basilica in a phosphorescent light, “faint and beautiful” until, at eight o’clock, the lights of St. Peter’s were lit and St. Peter’s “was all at once a glare of light,” a sight, he wrote, “well worth all the rest of the Holy Week.”⁹⁶ The celebrations were wound up on 8 April with the traditional and spectacular “exhibition of fireworks” at Castel Sant’Angelo, which Parkman compared to the “eruption of Mt. Etna.”⁹⁷ On 9 April, sorry to leave, Parkman left Rome and headed for Florence.⁹⁸ He was never to return.

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To be sure, it is a fact that Parkman had formed his own opinion of both the aboriginal peoples and Catholicism well before his European and

⁹⁴ *Diario di Roma*, 30 (13 April 1844).

⁹⁵ *Diario di Roma*, 29 (9 April 1844).

⁹⁶ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:198; *Diario di Roma*, 29 (9 April 1844). The first blessing had taken place on 3 April.

⁹⁷ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:199; *Diario di Roma*, 29 (9 April 1844) and 30 (13 April 1844).

⁹⁸ Parkman, *Journals*, 1:199.

Oregon Trail tours. According to Jennings, no external influence could change his deep Anglosaxon, social Darwinist imprint, although it is impossible to disentangle the factors contributing to Parkman's hostility: "[T]he nervous disease torturing him even as a young man, the environment of Boston in his youth, his reading and education." With regard to the aboriginal peoples, Jennings adds, "there is reason to believe that the [Oregon Trail] adventure merely confirmed and strengthened preexisting attitudes".⁹⁹ Why then Parkman's western journey is considered by historians an essential stage in his life and career, whereas the trip to Rome merits little more than a footnote?

Parkman went to Rome to examine Catholicism that had been the essential background of the history of French Canada. As all his readers know, Parkman read the conflict between France and England as armed combat between "Liberty and Absolutism," with religion a main protagonist. New France he saw as the "unflinching champion of the Roman Catholic reaction," New England as the "vanguard of the Reform."¹⁰⁰ Doughty maintains that "no part of his European trip had a more quickening influence on his historical dealings with ... Catholic Canada."¹⁰¹ And Franchot explains that this "sequential narrative," made of what Parkman encountered in Italy early in his life and incorporated later into his "mature" history, legitimized his interpretation of Anglo-America's victory over ecclesiastical corruption and political authoritarianism.¹⁰²

In agreement with Jennings, this writer believes that Parkman's views on both Catholicism and the savagery of the North American aboriginal peoples was well formed before his Roman visit and the Oregon Trail journey. However, perhaps even more than the latter, it was Parkman's direct experience in Rome which took him beyond a vision of indistinguishable multitudes and undifferentiated masses to the single men and women they comprised. Overall, the Catholic church would remain a reactionary and authoritarian body. But it would comprise refined and respected scholars such as Glover, sound and tolerant spiritual counsellors such as Father Luca, rigid, repulsive bigots like St. Ives, ingenuous, obtuse enthusiasts such as the good friars at the convent of San Cosimato, and gory custodians of skeletons such as the Capuchins. As for the faithful, the common people in the Papal States, as a good post-revolutionary New Englander

⁹⁹Jennings, "Parkman," p. 320.

¹⁰⁰Parkman, *Pioneers*, 1:14.

¹⁰¹Doughty, *Parkman*, 1962, pp. 77-86, quotation at p. 85.

¹⁰²Franchot, *Roads*, p. 35.

Parkman wryly notes their tendency not to take overseriously the magnificent ceremony imposed on them by an all-too-present, all-too-visible hierarchy. At the same time he is forced to observe the absence of any sign of reaction to the old régime, collectively transforming them into easily-humoured and easily-satisfied crowds. The Boston historian's days in Rome significantly confirmed Parkman's vision of Catholicism as a doctrine and of the Holy See as a centre of political power. They also helped depict its clergy as a varied and multifaceted category, and its faithful as crowds which their religion made indistinguishable from the crowds of any other Western religion.

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GREGORY M. PELL

TOBINO'S INEFFABLE:
CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH URBAN LANDSCAPE

Essi [i Viareggini] non emigrano. Sì, possono stare fuori dei mesi, a bordo di una tartana o di un navicello, ma poi vogliono ritornare a casa loro, quali possano essere i disagi della derelitta casa, non molto dissimile dalla barca che hanno momentaneamente lasciato¹.

The dominant tone of Mario Tobino's writing is that of a lyric expression guided by instinct and memorial impulses. More precisely, he has the ability to portray the ineffable with simple, economical clarity. With a crisp style, Tobino renders the abstract concrete, offering to the reader the recondite inspirations and the idiosyncratic whims of a place. In this study, that place is Viareggio. Particularly idiosyncratic is the nautical ethos of Viareggio, seen in *Sulla spiaggia e di là dal molo* and *L'angelo del Liponard*. As Magrini observes, it figures among his most common themes: "Mario Tobino ha scelto come oggetto di rappresentazione letteraria, quindi della sua intera opera: la comunità di nave, la comunità di organizzazione militare, sia regolare sia clandestina, la comunità di ospedale psichiatrico" (Magrini, "Mario Tobino," 21). Tobino writes such works as *Sulla spiaggia e di là dal molo* and *L'angelo del Liponard* with sporadic reflections as he delineates his own historical perspectives, the pride for his city, and the legendary—though not necessarily verifiable—events of his city. The events reveal the unutterable *éprit* of the citizenry behind which Tobino outlines the architectural spaces as a physical extension of the former's transcendent quality. In this article, we will examine the ineffable inward quality of Viareggio. Through Tobino's metaphoric prose, this quintessence will culminate in the architectural experience of the city.

Tobino's connection to Viareggio and the metaphors that he employs to emblematise it and integrate it into a folkloric oral tradition are compelling. While *Sulla spiaggia* and *L'angelo del Liponard* appear disjointed and fragmentary, his overall ineffable sentiment-as-thesis offers his works coherence.² In these works, a series of nautical metaphors serve to express

¹ Sbrana, *Viareggio*, p. 115, referring to the Viareggio of 1870.

an inner character of the city. Marabini is quite aware of this when he writes: “In *Sulla spiaggia e di là dal molo* il centro è Viareggio. E anche se il libro risulta composto di brani giustapposti e nati da occasioni diverse, ha pure una sua fisionomia. È l’unità che proviene, come sempre, da un sentimento” (Marabini, “Tobino,” p. 323). Tobino tenders the reader a notional vision, of which one can see the whole only through its parts. Writing in anecdotal fragments, the author projects Viareggio as a synecdoche where each part stands for the whole and the whole is in each part. On more than one occasion he refers to his city by a nickname of his own invention: Medusa. On this Seroni remarks: “Qui, nei modi più propri al narratore, Medusa diventa il mondo, si fa lo specchio di un tempo difficile e colmo di complessità” (Seroni, “L’opera narrativa,” 18). Despite its geographic connection with the rest of Italy, Medusa-Viareggio is a world that exists on the margin. The nautical theme in *Sulla spiaggia* and *L’angelo del Liponard* best expresses this isolation and pride, as well as the capricious temper of the Viareggians. As the boat and the sea represent the ideality of the author and solitude of Viareggio, the sailors and the boats that come in and out of the *darsena* “divengono le chiavi di volta per la conoscenza non

²Mario Tobino’s work is interesting in the sense that it still fails to find a distinct place within literary criticism. Part of this problem results from the fact that he is so difficult to classify as a writer. Musumeci refers to this difficulty of classifying the works of Tobino. For instance, while comparing *Le libere donne di Magliano* and *Per le antiche scale*, he says: “First, it is not accurate to call them “novels” (quite possibly none of Tobino’s works is properly a novel), nor does Tobino in fact label them as such: the first carries no label, the second is called simply “una storia.” Rather, they are portraits, fragments of experiences, rapid sketches that emerge from the repository of memories of the author, and ask to be recomposed in some artistic form” (Musumeci, “Tobino,” pp. 80-81). Aside from his poetry, he has written a score of novels, but to call them novels is quite misleading and avoids the problem of classification. Among the critics of Tobino’s works—from Del Beccaro to Luti; from Grillandi to Pullini—there are only two who actually discuss the issue of category at any depth: Magrini and Marabini. Many of Tobino’s books could easily be qualified as diaristic works, anecdotal memoirs and local histories, novels, anti-novels, and chronicles. Tobino’s main characteristic, in that respect, is that he exists rather independently from most literary movements. His cycle on the *manicomio* is full of books (for example, *Le libere donne di Magliano*, *Gli ultimi giorni di Magliano*), which are diaristic or fragmentary to the point that they defy categorization. In fact, perhaps because Tobino spent so much time as a psychiatric doctor working in mental institutions, many people did not regard him as a true writer, but merely as a doctor who, as a hobby, wrote.

occasionale del mondo esterno" (Grillandi, *Invito*, 87). Tobino's ideality is a subjective rendition of an external reality formed through the abstraction of pride for Viareggio and a transcendent, ideal image that may only exist in immanence. With these elements, Tobino succeeds in offering his reader a host of metaphors and lyric prose that approximate the ineffable life force of Viareggio and the author's connection to it.

Particularly in *Sulla spiaggia e di là dal molo*, and additionally in the short stories of *L'angelo del Liponard*, Tobino metaphorises Viareggio as a ship (architecturally) and as an island (socio-geographically). Furthermore, Viareggio assumes a metaphor which mirrors the process whereby older, traditional ways clash with the modernity imposed from the outside. In this regard, the city is a metaphor for the inevitable passing of time against which a culture must struggle or acquiesce. Through Tobino's narration, one witnesses Viareggio's changing architectural design. Initially, the design of the city comprises nautically-inspired wooden constructions built either by *calafati* themselves or inspired by the craftsmanship of the *calafati* and other shipbuilders. Then, chronologically prior to, and during, the composition of *Sulla spiaggia*, Viareggio evolved into a site of "cemento armato" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 122) inspired by non-local architects from Florence (and other places) with no vision of Viareggio's poetic, nautical texture. In as much as Tobino speaks so little in general about architecture and city design within the book, it is particularly significant and revealing when he does, especially when he focuses on the changes wrought by outside influences.³ Tobino's strongest application of metaphor is made when he casts Viareggio as a boat that is figuratively capsized by the architectural designs and ideologies of the outside world.

Fascism appears as one of these outside factors, though Tobino does not give it a larger historical context. He avoids a lengthy discussion of Fascism because he is more interested in elucidating the poetic individuality of Viareggio's citizenry than exposing any overall denigratory effects from political movements or general tendencies that affected Italy as a whole. Tobino's concern is the uniqueness of Viareggio.⁴ He does not give the Fascist move-

³This dichotomy of inside/outside is apparent not only throughout the works at hand but also in other works where Tobino imagines the alienated, idiosyncratic inmates of a mental hospital to be misunderstood by the seemingly 'normal' people on the outside who cannot see the poetic clarity of madness.

⁴Pullini comments thus: "Ma poi si risale indietro ancora nel tempo, alle origini del fascismo nel 1920, con l'uccisione di un carabiniere in borghese da parte di un appuntato, e un seguito di tumulti, un tentativo di rivoluzione popolare. Ma con la sezione "Al di qua del canale" [da *Sulla spiaggia*] si ritorna a Viareggio rie-

ment its own chapter, its own dissertation and explanation. Yet, for such a minor element in Tobino's writing, the subtext of the commentary is quite powerful as it actively focuses on Viareggio's spirit. With the discussion of the 1930s and the structural changes that accompanied them, the author emphasizes this anarchic fervour which he attributes to the sea more so than to a reaction to the strictures of the Fascist hierarchy.

For example, in the very brief chapter entitled "16 maggio 1921" Tobino presents a reflexion of a political struggle between the subversive Viareggian Communist *reds* and Fascist *blacks*. The former belong to the *darsena*, where they gathered at the club of the shipwrights; the latter are primarily outsiders, *terrazzani* of more upper-class lineage. When many were injured as a result of the clash between the reds and the blacks, Tobino observes that this "Era il primo delitto politico, fatto inusitatissimo in una città dove i lutti esistono solo per violenza del mare" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 108). Tobino's brief treatment speaks volumes on Fascism. He contrasts the nautical soul with the fascio-political world. The Viareggian way is not an ideology. It merely becomes one by default when forced into contrast with the order of Fascism—an order that is anomalous to the innate free spirit of the nautical soul. For Viareggio, the natural order is associated with the sea. From the sea they were born and to it they return in death. As Tobino notes in the first line of the novel, "Viareggio viene da lontanissimo" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 11). It seems to come from an open sea freed from ideology.

Tobino sketches Viareggio's ineffable identity, finding it impossible to avoid its obvious nautical motif, its traditional associations with the way-faring life, and the lore of the great captains. With a singular narrative voice that seems to speak for all Viareggians, from the beginning Tobino synthesizes lore, pride, and metaphor. Tobino first prepares his reader with the idea of Viareggio as a ship and then expresses this vision concretely in its very architecture. He refers to Viareggio's sail in a literal way (as seen through the exaggerated prism of its citizens), but also as a metonym (the sail for the vessel). Then, the part fuses with the whole to present a city as ship:

Quanto ti amo o mio paese, fosti ingenuamente generoso anche se tutti ti ignorano. Tenterò di narrarti con la più dolce modestia, aspiro a dire anche il tuo male, la corruzione, come succede che facilmente il vizio avanza. E se ho vissuto abbastanza per liberare tutto ciò che so, dirò anche la tua vela, quanto si distingueva in tutti i mari, la più forte d'Italia, la più numerosa. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 24)

vocata nei primi anni del Novecento rispetto a quella degli anni trenta: ed ogni tanto un giudizio sintetico sul fascismo" (Pullini, "Mario Tobino," p. 56).

In Tobino's denotative discourse, Viareggio's architecture emerges from the depiction of its innate quality. Over this, the author superimposes its figurative, connotative nature through his own expressionistic style. In its implicit comparison, a metaphor relies on the immediate distances and interactions between the metaphoric tenor and its vehicle. It is never perfectly clear in Tobino's narration, however, whether he expresses Viareggio's architectural configuration in its literal denotation or in his own associative connotations. Viareggio is a ready-made metaphor, a *metaphora in factis*, whereby the city is what it appears to be and something more. That is, Tobino could simply be embellishing a city which possesses an innate, lyric beauty, or he may be mythologising a less objectively obvious ethos that only he perceives. One could argue that Tobino's metaphors of Viareggian life (primarily the architecture-as-ship) reflect his own perceptions or that they reflect his expressionistic conceptualizations conditioned by memory and pride.

Within *Sulla spiaggia*, the chapter "Un modesto segreto" serves as a further example of this tendency. The author recounts being a member of the "teppa del Piazzone," yet another important cityscape in Tobino's lexicon. The *teppa* is a group of Viareggini that is reminiscent of the recurring characters in Fellini's *Vitelloni* and *Amarcord*. The *teppa* is an adolescent extension of the anarchic Viareggian affectivity. It is part of what Vanelli calls, "il desiderio di vita libera e spensierata, lo spirito anarchico" of Viareggio ("La poetica di Mario Tobino," 560). Furthermore, within this group Tobino's historical perception of Viareggio begins. Amongst this whimsy of playful pranksters he found his solidarity:

La mia storia di Viareggio parte dalla teppa del Piazzone [...] erano loro i miei grandi amici con i quali, se un altro destino non fosse intercorso, forse sarei stato felice tutta la vita, e forse non avrei neppure scritto, dato che vivere in quel modo era la completa poesia. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 59-60)

Furthermore, while Tobino elucidates what *would have been* different, he reveals the origins of his exaggerated, poetic view of Viareggio: the very nostalgia for his childhood and a sentimental envy for his mates who would later become *marinai*.⁵ His secret is this:

Perché ero, sono stato della teppa del Piazzone, e Ganzú, Adriatico, Truppino, Tanacca, Tono, Osvaldo, all'improvviso, uno dopo l'altro, non c'erano più, erano andati in mare, come mozzi, ragazzi di bordo. I loro padri erano marinai, qualcuno padrone di barca, e a loro insaputa li imbarcavano, li avviavano al loro cammino [...] Io avevo diverso desti-

⁵Ironically, his being distanced from his friends and the life of Viareggio greatly incited him not only to write this way, but to write at all.

no. Ero figlio di farmacista⁶, dovevo studiare, anche se male, a strappi. Qui capii la diversa condizione sociale e se anche, col muso rivolto a loro, presi la mia strada, il mio cuore rimase nel *Piazzzone* ad attendere chi non sarebbe più tornato verso di me [...] I miei amici erano partiti; riapparivano per pochi giorni, dopo tanti mesi; erano diventati affettuose immagini fluttuanti tra lontane onde. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 60-61)

Tobino cannot recall another time in his life when he lived with such “assoluta partecipazione alle naturali leggi” (*Sulla spiaggia*, 60). His friends have become verses in a long poem that is the sea. Life in Viareggio is a poem that writes itself; Tobino records it as if he were merely its medium.

The *Piazzzone* itself reverberates as a metaphor of urban space. It is a locus amoenus of a classless society. In the tradition of Viareggio’s “dolce anarchia” (*Sulla spiaggia*, 12)—a term decidedly and poetically anti-Fascist—it is not an accident that Tobino’s temperament was that of an “anarchico caratteriale, cresciuto in una Viareggio dove un costume di libertà paesana consentiva all’infanzia di non conoscere differenze di classe” (Del Beccaro, “Mario Tobino,” 477). The locus of the *Piazzzone* is a symbol of an egalitarian society that can be preserved only as an idea. It is doubly important for Tobino because the connection with his comrades was forged there and those very comrades have followed another course: the adventurous life of the sailor that is their natural birth right. This schism stands as our writer’s incipient longing to reconnect as much with the times as with the natural poetry of a life he was not destined to live.

Tobino’s yearning to turn back destiny is his expressionistic conception of Viareggio that manifests itself in his prose. Precisely because of this, one cannot easily discern what is truly metaphor from what is a real description of naturally metaphoric objects, for to relive the times means to recreate its urban landscape. As René Wellek and Austin Warren insightfully wrote, “We metaphorize [...] what we love, what we want to linger over and contemplate, to see from every angle and under every lighting, mirrored in specialized focus by all kinds of like things” (*Theory of Literature*, 197). Tobino himself is unsure of how much he has embellished through the prism of nostalgia and pride for his city, causing the reader to enquire how much legend is in his anecdotes and portrayals. To elucidate this point we refer to Tobino’s own words:

Tante volte mi sono domandato se io deliro quando parlo del mio paese, e ogni volta mi rispondo che anzi, invece, tengo stretta la martinicca,

⁶For a more complete vision of Tobino’s diverse destiny, see his *Il figlio del farmacista*.

stringo il freno come quando si parla di parenti. Sono soltanto un testimone, ho appena navigato qualche miglia; io sono un terrazzano che si aggira della darsena e affettuosamente ascolta chi ritorna dal difficile mare, riferisco ciò che ho udito, quel che mi ha nutrito. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 25)

With “riferisco ciò” Tobino lends an air of impersonal, possibly objective, testimony (the “*Sulla spiaggia*” part of the title, which represents a sense of reality). With “quel che mi ha nutrito” he represents a more personal, intuitive rapport with reality (the “di là dal molo” half of the title, which represents the notion of ideality and fable).⁷ The notion of sailors on the open sea instills in him a sense of mystique and adventure. Tobino offers one character, in particular, who exemplifies these qualities experienced through the imagination: Puccinelli, the professor of the Scuola Nautica—a man who had never even sailed, but who had extraordinary mathematical and astronomical knowledge. Despite Puccinelli’s lack of practical experience, to Tobino he embodied the ethos of the city and would make great sailors of his fellow citizens:

Ed era bravissimo in astronomia, quasi, per lui sordo, il linguaggio dei cieli fosse più agevole, perfetto in navigazione, lui che non aveva mai oltrepassato la punta del molo. Fu lui l’anima della Scuola nautica di Viareggio, dette lui la chiave, casalinga e sapiente; in quelle menti marinare disposte ma non usate alle sottigliezze dell’arte gettò consapevolezza, vestì di matematica il loro istinto, tradusse in pensiero quella navigazione alla quale fino allora essi erano arrivati col coraggio, con l’innata virtù. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 32)

Though limited to the land, his heart and his mind reside in an ideality metaphorised by the numinous sea. He is a Viareggian.⁸

Tobino discusses the marvel of the sea against the reality of the *entroterra* of Viareggio within the context of urban spaces. Further, he extends it into one of the most common architectural structures in Italy: the soccer stadium. The chapter entitled “Le tre giornate” recounts one of the few events in *Sulla spiaggia* not associated with the *darsena*, its boats,

⁷Pullini’s full citation reads as follows: “trasformando subito il sospetto di una letteratura di impersonale testimonianza (« riferisco ciò che ho udito ») in intuizione di un rapporto personale, lirico, con la realtà (« quel che mi ha nutrito »)” (Pullini, “Mario Tobino,” p. 52).

⁸It is in this liberating idea that the “alienati” of *Libere donne* live, as far as Tobino believes. Though they are limited to the walls and cells of the *manicomio*, they might be closer to a real truth.

or the captains and the sea. Early in this section, Tobino connects the sea itself with Viareggio's soccer team as if this ineffable is ineluctably joined to all aspects of Viareggian life: "Per la destrezza che impone il mare a chi fin da bambino lo frequenta, la squadra del Viareggio aveva una sua spavalderia" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 67). It is important that Tobino refers to the Viareggians as "loro che andavano in mare, poveri" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 73), and the side from Lucca as "terrazzani, che lasciavano il canale pieno di sabbia" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 73). One's glory is inextricably tied to the sea; the other's to the land that corrupts it. For *il Viareggio* to lose to a team of such *impure origins* would have meant shame for Viareggio. So when the *Lucchesi* tally the score in a game that Viareggio 'should have won', a riot ensues during which Viareggians attack the opposing squad screaming: "Vi si picchia tutti ... Basta! Vi si ammazza" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 73). This moment resulted in the three days of confusion, the culmination of which is Tobino's parodic reflection of a Soviet-inspired junta and an occupation of the municipal buildings and courts. Suddenly, the sweet anarchy of Viareggio turned into a bitter three-day revolution; a mutiny in this normally serene ship. In so doing, Tobino offers the reader a greater subtext still. So far, he narrates *Sulla spiaggia* with his gaze mostly on the *darsena*, the *molo*, the *piazzzone* and the very people connected with the thalassic life. Yet, when he turns that gaze away from boundless fantasy of the seas to the inland area, his characters meet a harsh reality that does not offer them the same poetic solace that they experience with the sea. The implication is that the characters were destined to react negatively when their free spirits were confined to the limited spaces of the inland soccer stadium. Vanelli presents his own perspective of these characters who are accustomed to open spaces:

A questo [...] sono legate tante opere di Tobino, soprattutto i racconti marini e viareggini e quelli di avventura, da "La gelosia del marinaio" a *Sulla spiaggia e di là dal molo* dominati da una spazialità aperta, da ritmi distesi, da modulazioni liriche, che danno l'impressione della gioia contemplativa di chi è riuscito a sentire e a restituire nel particolare una traccia della bellezza e dell'armonia universale. (Vanelli, "La poetica di Mario Tobino," 557)

Not only were the Viareggians out of their 'element' in the stadium, but their inner harmony was disturbed by an external force: the *Lucchesi*.

Thus, it is curious to consider Tobino's motivation for including the *Three Days of May 1920*, as the tumult would later be called, within *Sulla spiaggia*, a novel that looks out to the sea for inspiration and equally envisions the sea in its architecture. The Viareggians were not wholly in their milieu when confined to a landlocked structure whose focus is to draw the

spectators' gaze within it (the realm of reality), to the actual field on which soccer is played; into active life, away from the abstract 'contemplative joy' mentioned by Vanelli. Tobino suggests that, by definition, the tumult arose because the environment was adverse to the *estro* of the Viareggians. This passage disrupts the nautical theme and flow of the narration as much as the event itself was a disruption for the characters.

Therefore, as Tobino metaphorically identifies the inhabitants of his city as the crew of a boat, the junta that forms rather like a mutiny, temporarily cleaves the loyal harmony of the crew and its vessel. This mutiny simultaneously amounts to an objective correlative of the very anarchic sentiment residing in each and every one of the Viareggians. Ironically, this is the only time in *Sulla spiaggia* that one gets a candid sense of the demeanor of the city's inhabitants; one of the few moments during which the reader is privy to the dialogue and intimate encounters among individual characters.

On this point, we consider the riot that instigated the three-day revolutionary siege. In the mêlée after the game, a young *ex-militare* named Morganti is shot by a *carabiniere* after seemingly little provocation. In the moment before Morganti is shot, Tobino offers the reader an abrupt, elliptical character sketch, but one which also captures the free nature of Viareggians:

L'appuntato Berti ripetè con ira: "Ho detto: Via!" e mosse l'arma davanti ai loro visi. Fu il più giovane, il Morganti, che rispose. Era a Viareggio amato da tutti, allegro, confidenziale, suo spasso partecipare a ogni vicenda pae-sana, tanto è vero che pochi minuti prima lui stesso era sul campo di gioco, in mutandine come gli altri giocatori. Correva su e giù lungo il lato del campo sforbiciando la sua bandierina di guardialinee. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 74)

It is here that the reader also meets Tobino's representative of Viareggio's conceptual utopia: the character named "il Trecca." We meet him after many lines of anonymous dialogue spoken in reaction to Morganti's murder and the ensuing siege. Il Trecca had:

[Un']espressione marinaresca, che significava rispondere con imme-diatezza al pericolo, fu lui a prendere il bandolo, a essere il comandante. Il Trecca era un calafato, guizzante di muscoli, asciutto; gli occhi grigi infossati sotto la fronte. Essere deciso era l'unica Sua gioia, manifestare l'energia. Forse, se fosse stato istruito, se avesse potuto sciogliersi con le parole, sarebbe stato diverso. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 80)

This pronouncement contrasts Tobino's own statement about himself, when he had earlier imagined what his destiny would have been had he not

been the son of a pharmacist: he would have remained and become a shipwright, as well. The irony is that he becomes a polar opposite of il Trecca. Yet, in this distinction, Tobino's very ability to express himself with words ("sciogliersi con le parole") has allowed him to give il Trecca the literary voice which he would otherwise not have had. In fact, Tobino clarifies this by saying: "È il poeta che fa rimanere le storie; se no diventano polvere, lontane larve" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 54).

Following the appearance of il Trecca, the corpulent, limping lawyer, Bonturi, appears. He is the revered intellect of the town. As a putative historical figure, Bonturi conveniently allows Tobino to defend his own value as an intellectual within the very community he sketches.⁹ Tobino has already established the cityscape, but now he discusses his characters further so that he can re-insert them into the architecture that mirrors their ineffable texture.

Though very different from il Trecca, Bonturi's soul is Viareggian. Despite being well-off, Bonturi had already quietly fomented revolution for the lower classes in the past. The following passage, which serves as analepsis, exemplifies this: "Una volta mise fuori l'orologio come la lancetta fosse per scoccare: 'Presto — non so ancora dirvi l'ora precisa — quei palazzi, quelle ville che sono dietro le vostre spalle, lungo la Passeggiata, saranno vostre'" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 83).¹⁰ The portly lawyer wants to reason, but il Trecca and his fellow subversives would have none of this. Therefore, when Bonturi asks whether the revolutionaries have notified Rome of the political siege, an anonymous voice responds with the separatist hubris of those living on an island remote from the rest of Italy: "Che c'entra Roma? Noi siamo di Viareggio. Ce l'hai sempre detto ... e i sovversivi non sapevano spiegarsi. Ma non era tutto facile? Più facile di così era impossibile. Era venuto il momento e l'avevano afferrato. L'ora, quella dell'orologio, era scoccata" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 85). It is notable that one voice seems to respond as if it were a chorus of all the voices, but the voice interrupts itself ("Ce l'hai sempre detto ..."): because it lacked the proper verbal capacity to detail what Bonturi had told them, they remain within the destiny in which il Trecca finds himself; one not shared by Tobino except in the common history.

Bonturi is subsequently portrayed alone, contemplating the above-mentioned situation and how to resolve the tension. Tobino offers the

⁹Though, clearly, as we previously stated, without the intellectually inspired poetics, this story would not be told to outsiders within the literary community.

¹⁰Though this dialogue flashes back to an earlier speech by Bonturi, the mention of the Passeggiata is a telling flash-forward.

reader one of the lawyer's thoughts: "Non concepiscono che esista l'Italia, che ci sia una nazione, e che noi siamo costretti a farne parte. Mi accusano di averli aizzati ..." (*Sulla spiaggia*, 87). But he is a lawyer and perhaps lacks the true anarchic soul of the Viareggians. Perhaps it is he who is wrong; perhaps he fails to see that Viareggio does not fit in spiritually with Italy and needs to remain an island. Bonturi ponders whether his poorly interpreted words had been, in part, a cause of the junta: "Volevo dire di ogni paese, tutti insieme, ogni città, un movimento universale. Non così, da anarchici, dopo una partita di calcio" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 87). They did not misunderstand him; but neither do they believe they are anarchic. They are simply Viareggians; they become categorizable only by default when forced into a comparison with a particular politics governed by an ideology. After the Italian military invades Viareggio, order is restored and even those who had been reticent to involve themselves in the tumult are proud to participate again in the "orgoglio paesano. Era stato bello buttare in aria ogni legge, alzare le barricate, sparare su chi si presenta col berretto del comando. Bello essere stati ribelli, liberi" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 104). The army's suppression parallels the moment in which the Viareggians began to lose the soccer game: it left them with the delusion of a conquest of a liberty that was merely an object of their fantasy.

Tobino clearly recognizes Viareggio as an idyllic place that exists despite the outside realities of Italy. Thematically, Tobino reflects on the time when Queen Maria Luisa, Duchess of Lucca, visited his city—clearly a part of the oral tradition, for the visit occurred in 1820. He conflates his own conception of Viareggio with that of the queen's supposed experience: "La regina adesso dava le spalle alla terra; il mare immenso le faceva credere più vero ciò che immaginava" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 19). For Tobino, the sea has become part of what Pullini calls a "mito del mare come apertura di sogno" (Pullini, "Mario Tobino," 53).

This becomes the subconscious lens through which Tobino's narrative idiom is refracted. Moreover, this shows through in other works, beside *Sulla spiaggia* and *L'angelo del Liponard*, where island and boat metaphors unite quite incongruous places. For example, in *Gli ultimi giorni di Magliano*, our narrator—working as a psychiatrist—is clearly confined to the compound of the inland mental hospital, relatively distant from the locus of the *Passeggiata*. After a certain law (*legge 180*) was passed, the mental hospitals were forbidden to accept new patients. The current patients were to be released within two years. In the interim, no patients left Maggiano, and none entered—the asylum languished. Yet, Tobino metaphorically sees this environment in nautical terms: "Ancora un bel bastimento, che per

ordine superiore non naviga più" (*Gli ultimi giorni di Magliano*, 113). Magrini refers to this correlation between hospital and ship: "l'equivalenza tra manicomio e nave è posta, invece, da Tobino in modo non casuale, bensì calcolato ed elaborato" (Magrini, "Mario Tobino," 22). The patients are relegated to the narrow confines of the asylum, unable to navigate in the outside world where so-called normal people sail. Tobino sees them as still navigating quite vigorously in their minds. This is a more poetic form of the 'ship of fools' found in Foucault's argument of the "Stultifera navis." In fact, Foucault would posit Tobino's static ship as the mediation between the old mythological 'ship of fools' and Foucault's own conception of mental hospital in his contemporary world:

Behold it moored now, made fast among things and men. Retained and maintained. No longer a ship but a hospital ... All this world of disorder, in perfect order, pronounces, each in his turn, the Praise of Reason. Already, in this "Hospital," confinement has succeeded embarkation. (Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 35-36)

Furthermore, the cut-off, isolated life of the *manicomio* of Magliano¹¹ not only functions as a microcosm of the world for Tobino, but also as a reflection of how the inmates of the asylum were not unlike the Viareggians in their isolation—psychological or geographical.¹² In the first chapter of *Sulla spiaggia* ("I quattrocento"), Tobino speaks of Viareggio's early inhabitants and how they lived "come in un'isola," finishing his thought with the following line: "A Viareggio vissero puri per sei secoli" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 12). Viareggio's isolation was a potentially negative fact of life, but Tobino considers it metaphorically positive, connecting this with the adjective "puri" (pure), suggesting that living on such an island is living purely—a hyper- *campanilismo*.

The very glue of Viareggio's community is its ineffable sense of controlled anarchy. In that sense, the *manicomio* as a boat takes on a greater meaning, for, as Tobino remarks in *Le libere donne di Magliano*, "L'alienato nella cella è libero, sbandiera, non tralasciandone alcun grano, la sua pazzia, la cella suo regno dove dichiara se stesso, che è il compito della persona umana" (Libere donne, 36). Tobino's love and admiration for his people differ little from his admiration for the marginalised and their 'otherness' in the mental hospital: "Un medico di manicomio, se è vivo, sempre vor-

¹¹The real-life place was called Maggiano.

¹²In fact, Luti called Tobino "un autore isolato" (Luti, "Il labirinto della parola," p. 85) in the rhetorical sense.

tica tra il peso dei delirî e la speranza che qualsiasi uomo, anche se pazzo, sia libero" (*Libere donne*, 56) Tobino finds a poetic communion between the inhabitant of Viareggio and that of the *manicomio*. They both perceive their environment as an instant metaphor. In this sense, Tobino, like a poet/madman, communicates in his metaphors that which he perceives at a pre-lingual level. Musumeci refers to this communion of ideality as being in the margins of otherness: "Poet and madman are uniquely and inextricably creatures of otherness. They share a solitary space, inhabit a marginal landscape at the edge and they speak a different language, a language of resemblances not of signs" (Musumeci, "Tobino," 86). He sees himself as liminally connected in spirit to the sailors of Viareggio and to the inmates of the asylum. As he portrays Viareggio, Tobino poetically relates that for which the sailors would not have had words, going from the res to the figura, while narrating lives lived without the mediation of refined signs. Equally, the inmates experience conditions for which the language of even the most reasoned intellect has no capacity. The unmediated experience of the mad is perhaps a natural normalcy which only appears to be madness to outsiders, for it is forced to be expressed through common words wholly insufficient for a pure, organic vision. Direct perception without the impediments of philosophy imposed over the experience would appear abnormal to those governed by ideological laws. By default, the seemingly mad seers are marginalized and misunderstood. Their pure, ineffable experience is disfigured by men of intellect.

As we have already remarked, in a world of perception and resemblances, Tobino blurs cause and effect: it is not clear whether the boats influence the architecture or if he just sees a subliminal connection and fills in the rest. The asylum patients and the Viareggians are inseparable to Tobino, and both are connected to the boat. As Tobino lauds the crew of his stultifera navis, to be sure one of Tobino's most cherished features of Viareggio is its boats—*barcobestia, bastimenti, golette, paranze, cutter*, etc. This is why Tobino comfortably metaphorises the hospital at Magliano as a boat. In the design of the boat Tobino shares a communion with his fellow Viareggians. It is the material form of the abstract, inconcrete essence of Viareggio.

The city becomes the ideal, Platonic form of a boat for Tobino: a boat sailing alone on a vast sea of immanence where the poetry of Viareggian life exists undisturbed. For example, in "Zufolo per due darsene" (a chapter within the fourth section of *Sulla spiaggia*), despite the sombre recount of the funeral service for a young girl named Silvia, Tobino still manages to 'construct' his vessels in the last two lines: "Intorno c'erano le barche, nel

bellissimo inverno terso di luna, il lavoro degli uomini trasformati in poesia" (*Sulla spiaggia* 196).¹³ Since the majority of the pre-World War II structures was inspired by shipbuilding and built by *calafati*, even the *darsena* itself becomes a piazza (and the boats and sailors frequent it as Tobino frequented the *Piazzone*).

Thus, Tobino redefines citizenship within *Sulla spiaggia*, speaking, with a passion for the legendary, of those who bore many generations of children aboard ships, as if their *patria* were not a land, but a boat. For example, in the chapter "Il capitano Angelo si diverte," the narrator makes a reference to the captain's wife: "C'era l'Adele Puccinelli, la moglie dell'Antonini, Sua compagna in tantissimi viaggi; il primo bambino era nato a bordo, i vagiti accompagnati dal gemere delle corde nei bozzelli" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 41). We discover that Captain Angelo himself was born aboard a boat when Tobino recalls how Angelo cared to wed a certain Emanuela, not of a "razza navigante" but of "nobile casato": "Emanuela non sapeva nulla del mare. La madre di Angelo, la Santina, che aveva partorito a bordo, navigato per anni e anni, era molto dubitosa di questo matrimonio" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 44). The notion of a navigating race forces the reader to see Viareggians as not simply different from other Italians. Tobino's narrative reflects an implication that the true *patria* of Viareggio resides not on the beach ("sulla spiaggia"), per se, but in abstraction ("di là dal molo").

The distinction that Tobino makes between *terrazzani* (landlubbers) and *viareggini* (sailors) implies that to be a true Viareggian one must be more than born in Viareggio, if not born at sea itself, but have the ethos of marineria in one's veins. A telling passage, which furthers this notion, is seen in the short story "Una festa a Telaro" from *L'angelo del Liponard*: "La chiesa, dentro, è la stanza di un vecchio capitano che fece il pirata [...] Potrebbe essere una chiesa che gli squali frequentano quando un loro congiunto muore" (177). The description here invites the reader to see not just a literal structure, but an intangible ethos that pervades Viareggian life. It appears as if the sharks and the sailors shared a greater connection—linked by the sea—than did the sailors and the *terrazzani*. In fact, as previously mentioned, the first line of *Sulla spiaggia* (in the chapter entitled "I quattrocento") mentions Viareggio's founding as if a boat of mysterious origins adrift on a sea had suddenly appeared in a port: "Viareggio viene da lontanissimo" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 11). For how long was it adrift? From where did it come? Was it born of the sea? In this regard, Tobino's reference (in the

¹³ Thus the boats are twice transformed into poetry: once in the seminal moment; the second time in Tobino's poetic account read on the pages of *Sulla spiaggia* ...

first person, no less) to his city as “Medusa” (*Sulla spiaggia*, 136), is revealing. The city is both a sea-creature and a mythic character.

Having defined the psyche of Viareggio’s citizens, we return full circle to the seminal thesis of this article: the cultural identity of a people as accounted through a lyric representation of its urban landscape. Within the pages of *L’angelo del Liponard* there are rhetorical comparisons which further develop the notion that to inhabit a structure in Viareggio is to inhabit a boat. The first instance is in the story “La gelosia del marinaio”: “Le case dei marinai odorano di bastimento, a viverci dentro è un po’ come vivere a bordo” (*L’angelo del Liponard*, 94). This implies that if one were to close one’s eyes, the difference would be negligible. In the chapter “I due marinai,” Tobino writes: “I due marinai parlano di viaggi, di porti stranieri, di bettole vicino al porto dove sembra di essere a bordo” (*L’angelo del Liponard*, 131). Familiar with the *darsena*, Tobino is sure to include these *bettole* (crude taverns) as a social extension of marinaria. He does not clearly elucidate whether these constructions physically resembled the internal quarters of a ship, or whether it was merely the atmosphere and the idiosyncrasies within that lent an air of being aboard a ship. Yet, where these locations may or may not have been visually ship-like, within them the élan of *marinaria* reigned:

Il caffè di Dario udì le più belle storie di mare, descrizioni di ardite manovre quando dal capitano dipende la salvezza di tutti. I giudizi che si davano sulle capacità di ogni marinaio erano definitivi e naturalmente al caffè Mazzini vigeva una severa gerarchia; quando entrava il capitano Antonio Antonini entrava un re, quando entrava suo figlio Angelo entrava il Delfino. Perché di lupi di mare, di nostromi carichi di esperienza, di marinai sciotattoli a chiudere e mollare i velacci, Viareggio ne aveva tanti, ma la risolutezza, l’illuminazione, la scienza marinara degli Antonini era unica. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 35)

The most significant chapter concerning boat metaphors in the architecture of Viareggio is “La passeggiata” in *Sulla spiaggia*. Sardi epitomizes the value of this architectural fixture as both a product of the Viareggian *esprit* and a reflexion of it:

E con gli occhi del ricordo Tobino rivede la favolosa Passeggiata, le costruzioni in legno che erano, ciascuna, il ritratto di chi le aveva costruite: ognuno, infatti, faceva secondo l’estro, in assoluta libertà di fogge e di colori, per esprimere speranze, nostalgie, rimpianti, per ancorare sulla terra il ricordo di una barca che lo aveva portato, attraverso i mari di tutto il mondo, in terre lontanissime, in paesi di fiaba. (Sardi, “Tobino,” 566)

Furthermore, the metaphor of the previously mentioned structure, called

the *Passeggiata*, begets yet another, parallel metaphor: the state of Viareggio's architecture before and after the Fascist era also metaphorises the ineluctable passing of time as outside forces undo what Tobino can preserve in his fabulous recollection. The fact that Viareggio was characterized by the "dolce anarchia" of the first chapter, linguistically predisposed the city to be counterpointed by the anti-anarchic, highly hierarchic Fascist regime. In so doing, our narrator re-evokes the *Passeggiata*, which echoes the ineffable quality of the city:

Allora era tutta di legno [...] così in quella v'era l'ombra del cassero, in altre le sagome di grossi barconi, in alcune la sveltezza delle golette. E tra di loro e sopra i tetti si muovevano grandi bandiere, sculettavano le garule multicolori bandierine dei pavesi. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 113-114)

Tobino further explains how the architecture should resemble a ship: "Le fogge erano le più diverse ma poiché i costruttori erano calafati, gli ideatori marinai rimasti a terra, quasi tutte ricordavano le faccende del mare" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 113-114). But inevitably the outside world changed everything. Referring particularly to Fascism in one instance, Tobino writes: "Viareggio fu sommersa dalla storia d'Italia non da un male proveniente dalle proprie viscere" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 114). The use of the adjective "sommersa" is interesting—boats are submerged and Tobino sees the downfall of his city in those terms. In his eyes, Fascism caused Viareggio to 'capsize'.

The nautical quality in the architecture of the *Passeggiata*, the focus of Tobino's metaphoric perceptions, was an affront to Fascism. The "dolce anarchia" will inevitably concede to the imposition of Fascist order. How could the Regime tolerate such expressions of separatist, local-colour identity? Tobino recalls that around 1930 the papers began to circulate articles referring to the colourful shacks (or *baracche*) and structures along the *Passeggiata*, saying that "quelle costruzioni che ricordano tolde, prue, relitti di bastimenti, carene abbandonate, erano un vecchiume, un segno di lazaronismo italiano [...] un controsenso nella nuova Italia imperiale e fascista" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 120-121). The architecture nettled the design of Fascism's vision. This visual poetry, unimpeded by formal overarching ideology, offended the cold, pragmatic tastes of the Regime, which was governed by a strict philosophy:

Venne l'ordine che le baracche dovevano essere distrutte, tutti i colori trasformati in quello unico della calce, ogni bizzarria, spontaneità e fantasia doveva farsi disegno di geometri. Venne l'ordine che Viareggio fosse distrutta, quella che era stata dei calafati, dei pionieri, dei marinai, dei pescatori. L'autentico ritratto doveva essere cancellato, se ne sarebbe

costruita un'altra, decorosa, gerarchica, dove finalmente non ci sarebbe stato alcuno spontaneo respiro. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 121)¹⁴

With regard to the *Passeggiata*, the podestà—who, Tobino confesses, was not even a Viareggian—executed his duty expeditiously:

Le baracche crollarono [...] Furono distrutte le ingenue e felici geometrie, quelle sagome ispirate a casseri, poppe, pennoni [...] Fu ferito l'estro dei viareggini [...] era come spaccare il loro cuore ... la Passeggiata di Viareggio si trasformò in un lenzuolo intirizzato di freddo, una corona di fiori di smalto da appendere una volta per sempre. (*Sulla spiaggia* 122-123)

The image of artificial flowers hung indefinitely, rather than an image of fresh, sweet flowers, stifles the senses. When the heart and soul of *marineria* had been damaged, poetry was quashed. Aleatory, capricious architecture, based on expressing the ethos of the boat and the uniqueness of the city, had been replaced by a cold, impervious architecture, not constructed with the same wood of the sea vessels, but in a cement that reflected the antithesis of authenticity: “Al posto delle liete baracche sorsero delle costruzioni in cemento armato disegnate da architetti di Firenze, disegni fatti in ufficio, senza neppure l’ombra della disavvedutezza dei viareggini” (*Sulla spiaggia*, 122). Tobino uses “disavvedutezza” in an indirect free discourse: it is the voice of the non-Viareggians pronouncing their judgement. Consequentially, he employs it not as a term of opprobrium but of encomium by contrasting it with the ‘bureaucratic’ order of that which replaced the original structures:

¹⁴With the anaphora “venne l’ordine,” the reader of Tobino recognizes a connection to the metaphoric boats: the city itself and the *manicomio* -as-boat previously cited from *Gli ultimi giorni di Magliano*. In 1978 the same “ordine” destroyed another locus of Tobino’s ideality. In his article on styles and communities in Tobino’s work, Magrini refers to this outside force, or order, as being one of the main contributors to the destruction of any of the three types of communities: “Le comunità di Tobino cessano per morte naturale, quando i movimenti che le hanno costituite e tenute in vita vengono a mancare, o quando, per esempio, una legge esterna ed estranea le abolisce.” (Magrini, “Mario Tobino,” p. 23) *La legge 180* closed the mental hospitals and ended an era for the psychologist-writer and his eccentric patients. Tobino refers to this moment through his usual nautical metaphor: “arrivò l’ordine mentre ciurma e bastimento erano in bella navigazione, ogni vela aperta, capitano e marinai esperti dei venti, capaci a fronteggiare ogni situazione, dallo zefiro alla cupa tempesta” (*Gli ultimi giorni di Magliano*, 114).

... nessun lontano barbaglio di quel concepire la vita come una festa. Della Passeggiata rimase soltanto il ricordo, ancora più vivo perché radicato nell'anima. Anche i nomi diventarono falsi: il Nereo, l'Eolo, il Balena, il Felice, i fratelli Domenici, Poldo, il Cirillo, furono in gran parte ripetuti su quelle burocratiche murature, povere anche in cemento armato, ma non erano più gli stessi, sembravano etichette sopra i loculi dei cimiteri, sigle di pratiche evase. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 122)

With Viareggio's soul broken, other changes were facilitated that would affect the urban landscape even still. A new set of attitudes and fundamental values accompanied this process of replacement. Though reluctant, Tobino himself admits sarcastically that he began to accustom himself to the changes:

Infine la costruzione di cemento, squadrata, arida, burocratica, fu ultimata. Era proprio bella, il ritratto dell'impero, c'era anche lo sgabuzzino per i biglietti del cinematografo, ma quanto diverso da quello precedente che era tutto intimo, puzzolente di sigaro, con lo sportello che aveva per chiusura una persiana da bambola, nelle pareti infiorettato di cartoline illustrate dai luoghi più lontani dagli artisti di varietà. Questo nuovo invece una ghigliottina, prossima a scendere. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 124)

These begot further irrevocable changes to Viareggio's identity so that even nature itself was damaged. The forest was razed to accommodate the next wave of cement structures so repellent to the Viareggian life force. The trees, which had produced wood for building boats and houses, were now gone. Unlike in English, in Italian, the mere mention of trees, "alberi," conjures images of the eponymously named masts of boats. For example, Tobino plays on the rooted plane trees and the 'tree' (as mast) in the moment during which order was restored after the famous "tre giornate": "I platani densi di foglie, l'immobilità del canale, il silenzio di attesa, davano un senso di memorabile. Si vedevano, subito al di là del canale, gli alberi dei bastimenti" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 101). Tobino fuses the sea and the land into one poetic moment whereby the discussion of real trees (platani) ineluctably streams the consciousness into the masts (alberi), which, in turn, are made from trees. So, in the tearing down of the "pineta" the last vestige of traditional Viareggian shipbuilding was metaphorically and literally erased. Tobino sardonically recounts this in his typically lyric-expressionistic style:

Poi si videro a Viareggio distruzioni di ogni genere, la gentilezza volata via, il genuino istinto lentamente strozzato come faceva Hitler con i suoi generali traditori; poi abbiamo persino visto sterminare la pineta più bella della nostra infanzia, più misteriosa di resine, quella che dal Marco

Polo andava alla Fossa. E oggi, là dove vivevano umidi sentieri, vergineo muschio, chiome di pini cullate dalla brezza, la musica dei loro aghi in accordo col tremolio della marina, affannano rachitici grattacieli con terrazzi uguali a deformati portasaponi, le pareti colorate di caramella. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 129)

The image of rachitic skyscrapers in the form of soap dishes could not be more of an antithesis to the serene, nautical image of the wooden boat. As Viareggio became less isolated, it lost its ship form. It became a terra firma looking out onto the sea, no longer a boat sailing on the sea's ideality or an island surrounded by its inspiration. After the Fascist era, Viareggio would never be what it once was, especially for our narrator. The shacks and the *bettole* would never reappear where the "casamenti" now stand: "Così in darsena, così in ogni strada, così sulla Passeggiata, la città si tramutava" (*Sulla spiaggia*, 210).

The architectural metaphor of the irrepressible passing of time is no more obvious than in this moment. Yet, as nostalgic as Tobino is for a magical time which may or may not have been as he described it, he is relatively optimistic and positive, even if somewhat reluctant to accept the times. Perhaps he is comforted by the knowledge that his poetic disposition will never be repressed, for it lies in his ideality. We recall Pullini's calling the sea a mythical aperture to dreams. A cynical Tobino mentions the destruction of the old that altered the rapport between the Viareggians and their sea. Referring to the architecture of the old Viareggio as compared to the *cemento armato* of the day, he relives, in a subtle metaphor, the passing of time and the perception of it:

Prima il mare si vedeva a sorpresa, di sghimbescio, per un pertugio. Dal molo si doveva arrivare a piazza Mazzini per trovare una vera apertura, un luogo dal quale mirare l'ampiezza dell'orizzonte, l'accavallarsi delle onde. Adesso, ogni quei tanti metri, le costruzioni si interrompono, c'è un vasto quadro di spiaggia, ai lati ci sono le quinte delle cabine e i loro terrazzini sono fasciati di tavole, diventano delle scatole chiuse, dai parallelepipedi poggianti sulla spiaggia che nelle notti buie e tempestose prendono l'aspetto di pesanti ordigni puntati verso il mare, di mostri accovacciati. Nelle notti di luna invece, quando il mare è placido, questi parallelepipedi si fanno sognanti e delicati, la spiaggia è d'avorio e mai toccata da piede umano, luccica per i raggi la trina delle onde. In queste notti di luna, il mare, la spiaggia, le cabine rinchiusse, diventano personaggi avvolti da una dorata nostalgia. (*Sulla spiaggia*, 126)

As long as the sea is there, there will always be a passage into dreams, for the sea is the medium on which the vessel travels. "La città si tramuta-

va,” Tobino remarks, but quickly adds, “Il mare no, non era possibile” (*Sulla spiaggia*, 210). The constancy of the sea is the constancy of the poetic voice of Tobino. This voice, infused with the spirit of his dear city and its people offers coherence to the novel. An ineffable sentiment as identity, expressed through urban spaces, becomes the protagonist that the reader follows consistently through *Sulla spiaggia e di là dal molo* and *L’angelo del Liponard*.

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PAOLO CHIRUMBOLO

LA FUNZIONE DELLA MUSICA NELLA NARRATIVA DI NICCOLÒ AMMANITI: DA *BRANCHIE* A *IO NON HO PAURA*

Nella narrativa italiana degli ultimi dieci anni si può riscontrare un fenomeno che, anche se non ancora adeguatamente approfondito da parte della critica¹, rappresenta uno degli elementi più innovativi e interessanti proposti dai cosiddetti giovani narratori. Autori quali Enrico Brizzi (*Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo*, 1994; *L'altro nome del rock*, 2001), Isabella Santacroce (*Fluo: storie di giovani a Riccione*, 1996; *Ti prendo e ti porto via*, 1999; *Io non ho paura*, 2001), per non citare Tondelli (*Altri libertini*, 1980; *Rimini*, 1985; *Un weekend postmoderno*, 1990), a ben ragione considerato il padre spirituale di questa nuova generazione, sono tra gli scrittori che più di altri hanno saputo includere all'interno dei propri universi narrativi riferimenti al mondo musicale italiano ed internazionale. In pieno spirito postmoderno, questi autori, oltre ad utilizzare frammenti e citazioni provenienti da altre fonti della *pop culture* quali la televisione², il cinema, la pubblicità e internet, si sono infatti rivolti anche alla musica (leggera, popolare, rock), trovando in essa una miniera di spunti e riferimenti che arricchiscono all'infinito le potenzialità comunicative delle proprie opere. Sia che l'influenza si realizzi sul piano formale (Santacroce), o da un punto di vista

¹Tra coloro che hanno menzionato l'influenza della musica sulla narrativa contemporanea va segnalata senza dubbio Stefania Lucamante che, nell'introduzione alla antologia di saggi sulla letteratura pulp da lei curata fa riferimento al mondo musicale due volte (22; 28). Nel medesimo volume si trova anche un saggio di Filippo La Porta che, parlando di Ammaniti, ricorda le sue "incessant references to music of every kind" (68). Sullo stesso argomento si veda anche Luca Gervasutti (23-33). Una nota a parte merita l'ottimo volume di Roberto Favaro, *La musica nel romanzo del '900*, in cui l'autore analizza il rapporto musica/letteratura usando una prospettiva (temporale ed ermeneutica) ben più ampia rispetto a quella proposta in questa sede. Favaro infatti copre un arco temporale lungo un secolo, analizzando autori fra loro diversissimi come D'Annunzio, i futuristi, Gadda e Pasolini. Le pagine dedicate alla narrativa contemporanea sono, in questo contesto, forzatamente limitate e si limitano alla discussione di Tondelli (soprattutto), Brizzi e Santacroce (307-315).

²Per questo aspetto si veda l'ottimo intervento di Gian Paolo Renello, che compare nella sopra citata antologia di Lucamante, intitolato: "The Mediatic Body of the Cannibale Literature."

intertestuale (come in Aldo Nove), la massiccia presenza dell'elemento musicale nella narrativa contemporanea appare innegabile³.

Tra i critici italiani che hanno dedicato alcune pagine al rapporto letteratura e musica si trova Barilli che, nel suo libro intitolato *È arrivata la terza ondata*, parla chiaramente dell'“onda sonora” che ha investito la narrativa italiana degli ultimi anni. Barilli, che individua una sorta di “audiosfera” (83) all'interno della quale tutti noi viviamo e operiamo e che oramai, volenti o nolenti, accompagna ogni momento della giornata, isola in particolare due aspetti fondamentali di questa “onda”: da una parte l'aspetto acustico e sonoro dell'elemento orale e, dall'altro, quello più esplicitamente musicale. Nel primo caso, dunque, il riferimento è a quegli autori e a quelle autrici (Ballestra, Campo) che volontariamente abbassano il registro linguistico delle proprie opere, facendole “suonare” più vere ed autentiche; nel secondo, il riferimento include quegli scrittori (Brizzi, Culicchia) che fanno ampio uso di quello che Barilli definisce “flusso sonoro”, un flusso che investendo la scrittura, la pervade di sonorità ed atmosfere tutte particolari:

È decisivo ricordare — spiega Barilli — il ruolo che il flusso musicale occupa in tutta questa narrativa, ben al di là del singolo caso di Brizzi, fino a costituire una larga dimensione collettiva, una specie di onda sonora continua rispondente quasi a un primordiale big bang che scandisce, ritma, incalza ogni evento, pubblico o privato: a conferma definitiva, se si vuole, che l'oralità, la sonorità prevalgono sulla scrittura, e che quest'ultima, anche quando sembra dominare la scena, invoca comunque di ricevere un complemento attraverso le varie esecuzioni musicali. (94-95)

Nonostante Barilli in queste pagine dedicate all' “audiosfera” non faccia menzione di Ammaniti, è possibile affermare che lo scrittore romano sia tra coloro che, sin dai propri esordi letterari, meglio abbiano utilizzato il connubio letteratura e musica. Sia che si tratti di epigrafi, di citazioni intertestuali, o di riferimenti a vari personaggi e celebrità del mondo delle sette note, la narrativa di Ammaniti è sempre pervasa da un sottofondo musicale che ne scandisce il ritmo e gli eventi, e che fornisce una interessante chiave interpretativa. Lo scopo che il presente saggio si propone è allora proprio il seguente: comprendere quali finalità e quali funzioni narrative rivesta la musica nei romanzi di questo scrittore e fino a che punto essa ne possa influenzare la ricezione e l'interpretazione.

³Anche se non se ne parlerà all'interno di questo saggio, è giusto rilevare come nel corpus narrativo contemporaneo trovino spazio anche romanzi in cui ad essere messa in evidenza non è la musica leggera ma, al contrario, quella classica, come per esempio *Canone inverso* (1996) di Paolo Maurensig e *Presto con fuoco* (1995) di Roberto Cotroneo.

Alla ricerca di se stessi: Marco Donati tra Roma e Nuova Delhi

Uscito per la prima volta nel 1994 per le Edizioni Ediesse di Roma, per poi essere ripubblicato nel 1997 da Einaudi (edizione da cui si cita), *Branchie*, primo romanzo di Ammaniti, è un testo che, uscito in sordina, ha ben presto raggiunto un discreto successo di pubblico e critica. Diviso in tre parti (“Roma”, “Nuova Delhi” e “Il castello”) *Branchie* è la storia di Marco Donati il quale, in prima persona, racconta la propria battaglia contro il cancro e il suo tormentatissimo rapporto con il prossimo, sia esso sua madre, la fidanzata Maria, o l’“orrendo Subotnik” (chirurgo incaricato di salvare Marco dal proprio male)⁴.

La musica, la cui importanza in questo romanzo è assolutamente centrale, fa la sua comparsa fin dalle prime pagine del testo e, come si vedrà, viene utilizzata dall'autore in vari modi e con varie funzioni: essa, infatti, può servire a definire un personaggio, a fornire una sorta di background sonoro che accompagna gli avvenimenti del testo, o a stabilire relazioni tra i vari personaggi.

La prima occasione in cui ci si imbatte in un riferimento musicale riguarda uno dei tanti incontri tra Marco e Maria in un locale della capitale, chiamato significativamente “Lo sputo”. Il bar, gradito a Maria “per via della gente” (12), si contraddistingue per la confusione e la caoticità della sua atmosfera in cui risaltano le ripetitive sonorità della musica tecno. Che questo genere musicale sia poco gradito all’io narrante risulta chiaro e dalla metafora usata da Marco (“Gli altoparlanti attaccati al soffitto vomitano musica tecno”⁵; 13) e dall’esplicito riferimento “al rumore della musica” (15) che si “ascolta” nel locale, e ben presto Marco è costretto ad abbandonare il campo. Ammaniti, abile narratore, ricrea attraverso rapidi accenni sonori un ambiente urbano e metropolitano il cui caos si andrà ad opporre, nella seconda parte del romanzo, alle atmosfere più misteriose e rarefatte di Nuova Delhi.

⁴Nel 1999, due anni dopo l'uscita del libro, il regista Francesco Martinotti fa uscire nelle sale cinematografiche una riduzione filmica di *Branchie*. La pellicola, che si segnala soprattutto per la sua mediocrità, vede come protagonista nel ruolo di Marco il cantante Gianluca Grignani, ennesima conferma del legame che unisce Ammaniti alla musica contemporanea.

⁵La metafora in questione è oltremodo interessante per due motivi: 1) rende immediatamente l'idea di cosa pensi Marco della musica tecno, associata ad un verbo la cui connotazione corporale è chiaramente negativa; 2) si riferisce all'intensità ed alla potenza di questo genere musicale le cui note invece di essere docilmente trasmesse, si riversano sugli ascoltatori con forza e violenza. Il verbo viene nuovamente usato da Ammaniti in *Ti prendo e ti porto via*, in circostanze molto simili (“Gli altoparlanti vomitano drum 'n' bass”; 26)

È infatti in India, dove Marco arriva in seguito ad una falsa lettera scritta dalla madre che tenta di salvarne la vita in tutti i modi, che il protagonista riscopre non solo un'armonia interiore oramai persa da tempo, ma anche il piacere del rapporto vero e sincero — e non superficiale — con gli altri. Se Roma è il luogo della musica che fa rumore, delle feste in cui “i ricchi si autoghettizzano” (27) ed in cui si balla al ritmo di Diana Ross e Falco (35), delle “belle senz'anima” come Maria⁶, Nuova Delhi è, al contrario, come già prefigurato dal nome della città, il luogo della rinascita, di una nuova vita che permetta al protagonista di riprendere a sognare, “volare” (48) e perdere la “zavorra” (48) che lo lega ad un mondo cui lui sente di non appartenere più.

In seguito da un gruppo di “arancioni” incaricati dalla madre di Marco di portare il figlio al sicuro, l’io narrante si perde nei meandri labirintici di Nuova Delhi. Ad un tratto, la sua attenzione viene attratta da “un suono che sembra nascere dalle viscere della terra” e che Marco definisce “continuo, indefinibile e familiare allo stesso tempo. Sembra musica ma manca il ritmo. Più l’ascolto e più mi sembra bello” (62). Il suono, prodotto dalla *Banda dell’ascolto profondo*, gruppo di avanguardia che usa esibirsi in luoghi capaci di prostrarre il suono all’infinito (fogne, cisterne vuote, caverne), è quanto di più diverso ci possa essere dalla musica alla quale Marco è abituato: laddove in città la musica è rumore, ritmo, movimento incessante, in questo contesto essa diventa ricerca di continuità ed armonia, e la “discrezione delle note” (chiara allusione alla frammentarietà della musica occidentale) viene abbandonata “a favore di un suono continuo” (63). Affascinato dai membri della *Banda* Marco decide di unirsi a loro, in qualità di suonatore di *didgeridoo*⁷, strumento degli aborigeni australiani in grado, se suonato correttamente, di riprodurre e mantenere “un suono continuo”. Ecco che la musica diventa allora per Marco un’occasione per cominciare quella ricerca di sé abbandonata a Roma e riscoprire una nuova armonia interiore ed un più

⁶Il riferimento in questione rimanda a Cocciante, artista usato spesso e volentieri da Ammaniti, la cui canzone “Bella senz'anima” rappresenta la migliore definizione della fidanzata di Marco, in precedenza così descritta: “Maria è bellissima. Mi fa dare di matto. Ha le labbra carnose e il seno prosperoso. Ha la pelle liscia e sempre abbronzata [...] Sono sicuro che è bella anche dentro. Voglio dire, apparato circolatorio, digerente e tutto il resto” (13).

⁷La scelta dello strumento australiano appare fra l’altro una implicita conferma della volontà di Marco di volere sempre essere al di fuori dagli schemi e diverso dagli altri, ed evidenzia un’altra delle caratteristiche dei riferimenti musicali di Ammaniti: la passione per gli strumenti esotici (si confronti, per esempio, l’uso delle launeddas in *Branchie* e dell’arpa celtica in *Fango*).

profondo significato dei rapporti umani. Il suono prodotto non è più rumore ma un “impasto omogeneo... musica celestiale”, e all’armonia musicale corrisponde, simmetricamente, quella umana: “Mi piace far parte di un gruppo musicale. L’intesa che si instaura durante l’esecuzione continua anche quando smettiamo” (69).

La musica si conferma veicolo esemplare di comunione fra individui anche nel terzo segmento del romanzo, quello ambientato nel terribile castello di Subotnik in cui Marco viene rinchiuso per potere essere operato e così finalmente salvato dal male che lo attanaglia. Proprio mentre sta per cominciare l’intervento chirurgico il protagonista, grazie anche all’aiuto dei suoi amici, riesce a fuggire. Inseguiti, i membri della *Banda* si imbattono in un gruppo di sardi allertati da Subotnik e i suoi seguaci per fermarne la fuga. Circondati dai sardi e oramai in trappola, i fuggiaschi stanno per arrendersi quando Marco, all’improvviso, ha un colpo di genio e comincia ad intonare i versi di una canzone popolare sarda. Cubbeddu e i suoi “rimangono interdetti, affascinati” (132) e si fermano indecisi sul da farsi⁸. Marco allora riprende a cantare con ancor più convinzione ed a quel punto la resistenza sarda è vinta ed i due gruppi cominciano a cantare e ballare insieme. L’ostilità iniziale si tramuta così, grazie anche al potere comunicativo della musica, in gioiosa convivialità (tutto si risolve in “una festa tra paesani”; 133), e Marco, che intende assaltare il castello per liberare gli altri prigionieri, può ora contare sull’aiuto di Cubbeddu e i suoi scagnozzi. Interessante inoltre sottolineare come il giorno che precede l’impresa venga celebrato con una grande festa al termine della quale la *Banda dell’ascolto profondo*, Marco e i sardi si cimentano in esecuzioni mozzafiato (da Baglioni ai Creedence, da Vivaldi a Battisti) in cui la musica diventa parte di un rituale inteso a celebrare la vita come valore assoluto, come unità di intenti, come linguaggio universale che unisce invece di dividere: “in India” conclude Marco, “ho trovato persone che mi piacciono, con cui mi trovo bene, che parlano il mio stesso linguaggio” (156). La ricerca del protagonista si conclude positivamente e, dopo tutta una serie di peripezie, Marco è dunque pronto per cominciare un’altra vita.

La musica come elemento strutturale della narrazione: i racconti di *Fango*

Se in *Branchie* una delle funzioni narrative della musica è quella di sottolineare l’evoluzione personale del protagonista ed evidenziare il contrasto

⁸Marco così commenta l’effetto prodotto dalla sua intuizione: “Li ho colpiti diretti nelle origini. La nostalgia è una bestia traditrice. Il pensiero di un accordo di mandolino, del basilico, di un piatto di fusilli basta a risveglierla e ci si sente subito soli e sperduti in terra straniera” (132).

esistente tra il mondo occidentale (superficiale e frammentato) e quello orientale (profondo e continuo) in *Fango* (1996) — raccolta di racconti che ha reso famoso Ammaniti — essa assume, vista anche la poliedricità del testo, ruoli diversi a seconda dei casi.

Come già nel romanzo precedente, la musica, di qualunque genere, rappresenta un elemento essenziale di cui Ammaniti si serve per connotare e definire meglio, socialmente e psicologicamente, i protagonisti delle proprie storie. In pratica, i riferimenti musicali permettono al lettore di identificare la vera identità dei personaggi e, magari, identificarsi con loro, senza che il narratore debba dilungarsi in dettagliate descrizioni psicologiche. Come in *Branchie* Maria viene definita “bella senz’anima” attraverso una rapidissima citazione della celebre canzone di Coccianti, così anche nel primo racconto di *Fango*, “L’ultimo capodanno dell’umanità”, i vari personaggi vengono associati a diversi artisti e stili musicali. Cristiano Carocci, ad esempio, pur di sfuggire al Capodanno in famiglia si rifugia nell’ascolto dei Nirvana, leggendario gruppo americano noto, oltre che per la propria musica, anche per gli eccessi del leader Kurt Cobain simbolo di una generazione in fuga da sé stessa; e Giulia, la bella fidanzata di Enzo di Girolamo, prima di scoprire la tresca tra quest’ultimo e la sua migliore amica Deborah, si lascia andare cantando una delle canzoni d’amore più celebri della storia musicale italiana, “Margherita” (32) di quel Coccianti⁹ che, seppur musicista tra i più dotati del panorama musicale italiano, è sempre rimasto lontano dall’impegno sociale e politico di cantautori come De Andrè, De Gregori e Guccini, legando la sua immagine ad un tipo di musica più leggera, sentimentale¹⁰ e popolare¹¹.

⁹ La figura di Coccianti, particolarmente amata dallo scrittore, viene usata anche in altri due racconti di *Fango*: “Ti sogno” (136), e “Lo zoologo” (220), e sempre per connotare con precisione i personaggi a cui il cantante viene associato.

¹⁰ La differenza tra le due donne di Enzo di Girolamo, Giulia e Deborah, diventa così ancor più manifesta. Da un lato Giulia, bella e un po’ superficiale, canta “Margherita”, dall’altro Deborah, intellettuale e sofisticata, scrive un romanzo incentrato su di “un musicista tunisino, suonatore di ‘ud, un antico strumento arabo” (76). Da sottolineare il fatto che anche la letteratura ha, in questo caso specifico, una funzione del tutto simile, per cui alla prima si associa il nome della Susanna Tamaro (“È ignorante da morire”, dice di lei Enzo; 36), alla seconda (che ha “un gran bel cervello”; 36) i nomi di Hesse e Kundera.

¹¹ Giandomenico Curi, parlando di Concerto per Margherita (1975), album in cui compare la canzone citata, così scrive: “partito da una musica di rivolta, da un cantare tutto di istinto e di rabbia [...] si ritrova alla fine a fare una musica tutto sommato ibrida, buona per tutti”; 203).

Di grande interesse è anche il secondo racconto della raccolta, "Rispetto", storia di orrori metropolitani in cui i protagonisti, banda di "sconvolti" pronti a tutto, decidono di passare la serata in discoteca. Il rapporto che lega questi personaggi alla musica techno è, di nuovo, di grande importanza, e fornisce al lettore un'immediata chiave interpretativa che anticipa, tematicamente e linguisticamente, gli sviluppi della vicenda:

Entriamo in discoteca compatti [...]. Ci abbiamo gli orecchini. All'orecchio. Al naso. Sul sopracciglio. Ci mettiamo a ballare. Ci piace la techno. Ci fa dare di matto. È una musica che risale su per il culo e che sfonda le budella e ci si espande dentro. Per parlare dobbiamo urlare. Per parlare dobbiamo strillare. (140)

Tutto, dall'abbigliamento al linguaggio e alla musica ("Cazzo come spara questa sera la musica"), contribuisce a creare uno stato di tensione che esploderà di lì a poco, quando i protagonisti abbordano alcune ragazze, le fanno salire in macchina e le portano al mare. La differente attitudine dei due gruppi (ragazzi vs. ragazze) viene una volta ancora sottolineata da un veloce riferimento musicale: arrivate a destinazione, infatti, due delle tre ragazze "incominciano a correre a caso e a cantare Eros" (141). Ovviamente, dietro questo brevissimo accenno si nasconde Eros Ramazzotti, cantautore sentimentale idolo di tutte le ragazzine d'Italia, da sempre affascinate dalle romantiche storie del cantante romano. Il contrasto, come si può vedere, è nettissimo, e l'abilità di Ammaniti sta non solo nella capacità di svolgere il tutto con una velocità ed un ritmo vertiginosi, ma anche nella bravura con cui egli dissemina i propri testi di vari indizi testuali. A ben vedere, infatti, il riferimento a Eros (Ramazzotti) è anche un'implicita allusione all'Eros¹², e cioè allo scoppio di amore violento che investirà tragicamente le malcapitate fanciulle, violentate e massurate senza pietà. Di grande impatto è, in questo contesto, la scena dell'uccisione di Maria. Stesa per terra, inerme, viene circondata dai giovani protagonisti che, simulando una orribile danza tribale, le si raccolgono intorno: "Torniamo indietro da Maria. È ancora stesa a terra. Ci guarda e poi prende a piangere. Noi le balliamo intorno come in discoteca. Vai con la techno. Perché non balli con noi?" (146).

12Un medesimo riferimento a Ramazzotti viene da Ammaniti usato nel racconto "Lo zoologo", dove il nome dell'artista romano viene nuovamente associato all'atto erotico-sessuale intercorso tra il protagonista della storia, Andrea, e Sabrina, ragazza conosciuta in discoteca: "L'aveva accompagnata a casa, a Genzano. E lì, in silenzio, nella stanza accanto a quella dei genitori di Sabrina, avevano fatto sesso tra orsacchiotti di peluche e manifesti di Eros e Ligabue" (215-216).

Oltre a definire implicitamente i personaggi, la musica in *Fango* irrompe nel testo anche da un punto di vista più strettamente formale e strutturale, e l’ “onda sonora” di cui parla Barilli investe direttamente il ritmo narrativo. È il caso del già citato “Rispetto”, la cui narrazione simula l’ossessivo ritmo della musica techno, ed anche del racconto che dà il titolo all’intera raccolta (la *title track* verrebbe da dire), vale a dire “Fango”, vero e proprio esempio di narrativa che “ti prende e ti porta via”. Il racconto, che narra la storia di Albertino, piccolo malvivente che cerca di rubare una partita di droga all’insaputa del proprio capo (il potente e spietato Ignazio Petroni detto il Giaguardo), si sviluppa infatti seguendo un ritmo da musica rock, attraverso una narrazione incalzante e senza respiro che il lettore non può fare a meno di leggere tutto di un fiato. Il risultato, notevole, è la prova che la musica entra nell’universo narrativo di Ammaniti non solo attraverso citazioni e riferimenti più o meno esplicativi, ma anche come elemento che ne condiziona e influenza l’elemento formale, accelerando all’inverosimile il ritmo narrativo:

In sella allo Scarabeo Albertino correva sulla Prenestina. Quella giornata non voleva finire più. Il vento gli tagliava la faccia. Più andava avanti e più si rendeva conto che non stava andando a una cresima ma a un cazzo di esame. A un esame bello e buono. Un esame dove lui scommetteva la vita. Il giaguardo gli avrebbe chiesto come era andata con il fricchettone. E lui che gli avrebbe risposto? (266)

All’interno dell’universo narrativo di *Fango*, la musica ha però anche un’altra funzione. Spesso infatti Ammaniti si serve di questo medium per fornire alla storia ed ai suoi personaggi una sorta di contrappunto ironico, che si va ad opporre a quanto effettivamente accade sulla scena. L’elemento sonoro, in sostanza, invece di assecondare il livello diegetico del testo viene ad opporsi ad esso e lo complica ulteriormente, generando in questo modo nel lettore un senso di straniamento e disagio. La vicenda di Filomena Belpedio, una delle tante protagoniste delle storie intrecciate de “L’ultimo Capodanno”, è in questo senso paradigmatica. In piena crisi depressiva (medita il suicidio), e di fronte alla serenità apparente degli altri condomini, Filomena accende distrattamente la TV, ove si trova costretta ad ascoltare le banali parole del cantante Drupi, il quale — quasi a voler ferire intenzionalmente Filomena — dichiara di augurarsi che nel nuovo anno “la gente diventi più tranquilla e rilassata” (28). Il contrasto tra la disperazione del personaggio e la scontata ovvietà delle affermazioni di Drupi è dirompente, e viene riproposto, seppur in forma diversa, qualche pagina più avanti, quando ad esibirsi in TV è un’altra delle icone della musica nazional-popolare italiana, Iva Zanicchi. Anche in questo caso, la contrap-

posizione tra la gioiosa interpretazione della Zanicchi (che canta “I Love Just the Way You Are”) e la misera condizione di Filomena (che giace “svenuta sul divano del salotto”; 69) è fulminante: Ammaniti — una volta ancora — riesce con maestria e leggerezza ad orchestrare un devastante effetto ironico che lascia sul viso del lettore un sorriso triste ed amaro¹³.

La musica come immagine: *Ti prendo e ti porto via*.

Il romanzo in cui la presenza della musica appare più marcata è probabilmente *Ti prendo e ti porto via* (1999), grazie soprattutto ad uno dei personaggi più riusciti della narrativa di Ammaniti, Graziano Biglia. Il libro, incentrato sulle storie parallele di Biglia e di Pietro Moroni, il bambino dodicenne innamorato della propria compagna di scuola Gloria Celani, è un altro ottimo esempio di come la musica possa aiutare l'autore a definire meglio i protagonisti delle proprie storie. In questo senso, l'entrata in scena di Graziano che ritorna dopo alcuni mesi al proprio paese natale, Ischiano Scalo, è significativa, e richiama alla mente alcuni film di Carlo Verdone¹⁴:

[La Uno turbo GTI] si fermò davanti al monumento dei caduti di Ischiano Scalo e rimase lì col motore acceso [...] Poi, finalmente, lo sportello del guidatore si spalancò con un gemito feroso. Prima uscì *Volare* nella versione flamenca dei Gipsy Kings e, immediatamente dopo, apparve un uomo grande e grosso con una lunga chioma bionda, occhiali da mosca e giacca di pelle marrone con un'aquila apache di perline ricamate sulla schiena. (20)

Il brano citato è di grandissimo interesse per almeno due motivi: anzitutto per il riferimento alla famosa canzone di Domenico Modugno “Volare” significativamente riprodotta non nella sua versione originale ma in quella più esotica e spagnoleggiante dei Gipsy Kings, prima allusione alla passione per la musica gitana nutrita da Biglia, chitarrista che vive “una vita al massimo ... sulle note di un merengue” (23); non sfuggano poi, in secondo luogo, i particolari del look di Graziano i cui lunghi capelli, unitamente alla giacca di pelle ed agli occhiali da sole modello “mosca” (così in voga tra le rock star di questi anni), contribuiscono a dare al lettore

¹³Non molto diverso è l'effetto creato dalla canzone cantata da Ambra (“Ti giuro amore, amore eterno, se non è amore me ne andrò all'inferno”; 122) che si contrappone alla tragica fine di Enzo di Girolamo che proprio in quell'istante sta per morire in seguito ai colpi infertigli dalla sua fidanzata.

¹⁴Il riferimento riguarda in particolare due pellicole, *Viaggi di nozze* (1995) e *Gallo cedrone* (1998), in cui i personaggi portati sullo schermo dal talento di Verdone (rispettivamente Ivano e Armando Feroci) ricordano, per età ed atteggiamento, il Graziano Biglia di Ammaniti.

un'idea già abbastanza precisa sull'identità di questo memorabile personaggio, appassionato della musica di Paco de Lucia, Santana, John McLaughlin e dei già citati Gipsy Kings¹⁵.

Il mondo della musica dunque, oltre a fornire ai personaggi una identità per così dire "sonora", legata cioè ai gusti musicali, fornisce loro anche un repertorio di immagine/immagini (il famigerato look) su cui basare e creare il proprio aspetto esteriore. Il caso di Mimmo Moroni, fratello maggiore di Pietro (altro protagonista del romanzo), è sotto quest'aspetto emblematico. Mimmo, "l'unico pastore metallaro di Ischiano Scalo" (150), si distingue infatti per la passione per la musica *heavy metal*, passione che egli manifesta in vari modi: attraverso l'arredamento della propria camera in cui fanno bella mostra di sé un poster degli Iron Maiden raffigurante "una specie di demone che spunta fuori da una tomba brandendo una falce insanguinata" (159)¹⁶ ed una chitarra elettrica completa di amplificatore; attraverso il proprio modo di vestire ("si aggirava per i pascoli con addosso il chiodo di pelle, i jeans stretti come una calzamaglia, una cinta con un sacco di borchie argentate, gli enormi anfibi militari e una lunga catena che gli penzolava tra le gambe"; 160); o attraverso il saltuario ascolto di maestri del genere come Ozzy Osbourne, Black Sabbath e AC/DC. Tuttavia, ed è qui la cosa più curiosa ed interessante, la musica è l'aspetto che lo attira di meno:

Che cosa ci trovasse di grande, in tutto ciò, non si sa. È certo che lui lo stimava molto il vecchio Ozzy. Stimava anche gli Iron Maiden e i Black Sabbath di cui comprava tutte le magliette che trovava. Di dischi invece ne aveva pochi. Sette, otto al massimo e li ascoltava raramente [...]. La

¹⁵ Il riferimento ai Gipsy Kings si può anche leggere come un rimando alla vita "zingara" di Biglia che, musicista di professione, passa la maggior parte del tempo in viaggio.

¹⁶ L'uso del manifesto come segno in grado di fornire informazioni supplementari sul personaggio rappresenta una delle strategie narrative preferite da Ammaniti. Riferimenti a posters raffiguranti rock/pop stars si trovano in alcuni racconti di Fango (nell'omonimo racconto, ad esempio, i posters di Jimi Hendrix e Bob Marley definiscono immediatamente la natura alternativa dello spacciato di droga definito dal narratore "un figlio dei fiori"; 234-235) e in *Ti prendo e ti porto via* (72; 159). Come ha scritto Marcel Danesi: "Within the home, rooms are meaningful spaces eliciting a broad range of emotive connotations [...] Bedrooms are felt to reveal the 'inner' self [...] The bedroom is a refuge and asylum from the outside world" (*Sign, Thought, and Culture*, 185). L'uso di queste immagini non è dunque un mero elemento "decorativo" della storia, ma un altro dei tanti indizi testuali forniti da Ammaniti al proprio lettore per avere più informazioni possibili sui personaggi, le loro storie e le loro passioni.

verità è che a Mimmo quella musica faceva schifo [...] Troppo rumorosa [...] Quello che lo entusiasmava dei cantanti Heavy Metal era il look [...]. (163-164)

Mimmo dunque ritrova nella musica hard una serie di segni attraverso i quali egli può esprimere il proprio disagio interiore, il proprio dissenso e la voglia di attrarre giovani coetanei, pur restando sostanzialmente indifferente alla musica in sé. Anzi, tramite una rapidissima nota ironica il narratore ci informa che, in fondo in fondo, al rumore del metallo pesante Mimmo preferisce la musica “leggerissima” di Amedeo Minghi (161), cantautore tra i più melodici del panorama musicale italiano. Alla luce di questi riferimenti al mondo della musica, la complessa e, se si vuole, ambigua identità di Mimmo Moroni viene messa a nudo: da un lato abbiamo infatti il “pastore metallaro” vestito da duro che si serve dell’immaginario heavy metal per affermare la propria virilità¹⁷ (musica come schermo), dall’altro, invece, si ha il Mimmo che, magari di nascosto, ascolta cantanti melensi come Minghi più affini, suo malgrado, alla propria personalità (musica come rivelazione)¹⁸.

Tra le canzoni preferite di Mimmo si trova anche “Sei bellissima” di Loredana Bertè. Il brano, citato in epigrafe, funziona in qualche modo da collante dell’intero romanzo e lega tra di loro le coppie Graziano/Flora e Pietro/Gloria. La canzone fa la sua comparsa verso la fine del testo (capitolo 127) in associazione con la figura di Flora Palmieri, la professoressa sedotta e abbandonata da Biglia. Delusa e frustrata da quella esperienza, ed oramai in preda ad una irreversibile crisi depressiva, Flora decide di fare un bagno caldo e di ascoltare la sua canzone preferita, che così recita:

¹⁷ Andy Bennet nel suo volume *Popular Music and Youth Culture* analizza e spiega molto puntualmente il rapporto musica/identità sessuale, mettendo in rilievo il ruolo “of the music industry in the construction of male and female gender identities through its promotion of peculiar styles and images” (44). La musica d’atmosfera diventa così “musichetta per froci” (*Ti prendo*, 97), quella di Vasco Rossi musica da veri uomini. A proposito di Vasco Rossi, è curioso segnalare come in seguito all’uscita del romanzo di Ammaniti il cantante modenese abbia scritto una canzone dal medesimo titolo (ora in *Stupido Hotel*), sorta di omaggio al narratore romano.

¹⁸ Grottesca è la scena in cui Pietro scopre il fratello maggiore sotto una quercia mentre piange disperato per problemi sentimentali: “il pastorello era vestito come il cantante dei Metallica e piangeva sgranocchiando le Tenerezze del Mulino Bianco”. Di nuovo, il contrasto creato da Ammaniti oppone la durezza del “metallo pesante” alla dolce tenerezza dei biscotti sgranocchiati da Mimmo e rende palese la natura bifronte di questo personaggio.

“Che strano uomo avevo io, con gli occhi dolci quanto basta, per farmi dire sempre, sono ancora tua e mi mancava il terreno quando si addormentava sul mio seno... e ripensavo ai primi tempi quando ero innocente, a quando avevo nei capelli la luce rossa dei coralli, quando ambiziosa come nessuna mi specchiavo nella luna e l’obbligavo a dirmi sempre bellissimaaaa! Sei bellissimaaaa! Ahhh! Ahhh!” (402)

Flora, che ha conosciuto l’amore grazie alle attenzioni di Graziano, ritrova in queste parole ed in questa canzone tutta sé stessa, e non può fare a meno di esclamare:

Questa canzone era la verità. In questa canzone c’era più verità che in tutti i libri e in tutte le stupide poesie che parlano d’amore. E pensare che la cassetta l’aveva trovata in un giornale. I grandi successi della canzone italiana. Non sapeva neanche come si chiamava la cantante. Non era un’esperta. Ma diceva delle grandi verità. (401-402)

Nel panorama culturale contemporaneo la musica, leggera o “pesante” che sia, acquista dunque una dimensione che va al di là del puro intrattenimento e diventa linguaggio in grado di parlare direttamente alle persone, più di quanto non sappia fare — come sostiene Flora, la cultura cosiddetta “alta”. La “verità” di canzoni come “Sei bellissima” arriva subito al cuore del destinatario, proprio come i riferimenti musicali di Ammaniti il quale, senza scavare troppo nella psicologia dei personaggi, utilizza questa strategia narrativa per dare maggiore spessore alle proprie storie ed ai propri personaggi.

Come si diceva in precedenza, la citazione della canzone della Bertè assolve anche un’altra funzione, quella di legare le due storie principali del testo. Come Graziano dice a Flora di essere bellissima (403-404), così anche Pietro vorrebbe trovare il coraggio di dichiarare il suo amore verso Gloria Celani, compagna di scuola e di giochi di cui egli è segretamente innamorato. Ricordando la canzone ascoltata nell’appartamento della Calmieri, Pietro pensa che dovrebbe aprirsi all’amica, confidandole i suoi reali sentimenti:

Gli ritornò in mente la canzone che la professoressa stava ascoltando quando era entrato nel bagno. *Sei bellissima! Ti diceva sei bellissima.* Gloria, sei bellissima. Gli sarebbe piaciuto dirglielo. Non ne aveva mai avuto il coraggio. Queste cose non si dicono. (420)

Purtroppo anche la storia di Pietro, come quella di Graziano e Flora, è destinata a finire tragicamente, ed ai personaggi non rimane che rifugiarsi nelle proprie paure, nelle proprie frustrazioni e fallimenti e, perché no, nella propria musica preferita.

La musica come sottofondo: *Io non ho paura*

Uscito nel 2001 ed accolto subito da un notevole successo di critica e pubblico, *Io non ho paura* è probabilmente l'opera in cui la musica assume un ruolo di secondo piano e rimane per lo più in sottofondo. In parte questo si spiega con il fatto che questo romanzo rappresenta un punto di svolta nella narrativa dello scrittore, una prova d'autore certo più matura e più profonda che vede protagonista non più giovani in cerca di sé stessi (Marco Donati, i vari protagonisti di *Fango*) o trentenni/quarantenni in crisi di identità (Graziano Biglia e Flora Palmieri), ma un bambino che — come il Pietro Moroni di *Ti prendo e ti porto via* (vera e propria anticipazione di Michele Amitrano) — scopre d'un tratto quanto sia complicato il mondo dei grandi e quante responsabilità si devono assumere quando si cresce.

Il romanzo, tutto narrato in prima persona da Michele, si ambienta in un paesino di un Sud indefinito chiamato Acque Traverse e racconta la storia del rapimento di un bambino (Filippo) da parte del padre di Michele e i suoi complici. La vicenda, che ha luogo nel lontano 1978, vale a dire un periodo storico ben diverso da quelli usualmente utilizzati da Ammaniti, viene connotata temporalmente attraverso gli opportuni riferimenti musicali inseriti nel testo¹⁹, e il lettore può “ascoltare” Paolo Conte (“Onda su onda”; 205), Lucio Battisti (“Con il nastro rosa”; 126), Mina (“Parole, parole”; 104-105)²⁰. In altre parole, la musica in questo contesto funziona da segno “indessicale”, ed aiuta il lettore ad entrare nelle atmosfere anni settanta evocate dallo scrittore.

Le canzoni di Battisti e Mina servono anche — come da consuetudine — a dire al lettore qualcosa in più sui personaggi. Nel primo caso, infatti, si parla di “rotture con il passato” e di “avventure che diventano storie vere” e si riferisce, indirettamente, alla storia di Michele che, una volta scoperta la verità sui loschi traffici del padre, si accorge che quella che sembrava una semplice avventura è invece foriera di tragici sviluppi (il suo ferimento e l'incarcerazione del padre). Nel secondo caso il brano, come spesso nella narrativa Ammaniti, è usato ironicamente. Come già Mimmo Moroni in *Ti prendo e ti porto via*, anche Felice Natale, incaricato alla sorveglianza del bambino rapito, si distingue per la propria natura ambigua. Se da un lato infatti

¹⁹Al termine della proiezione dell'omonimo film di Gabriele Salvatores avuta luogo a Toronto nell'aprile del 2004, chi scrive ha chiesto al regista quale funzione avessero nella sua versione le canzoni che si possono ascoltare (in alcuni casi diverse da quelle citate da Ammaniti). La risposta di Salvatores, che trova un suo senso anche per quello che concerne il romanzo, ha evidenziato come la scelta della colonna sonora era finalizzata a conferire al pubblico delle più precise coordinate temporali e dunque a meglio contestualizzare la storia.

Felice si mostra agli altri con un look ed un atteggiamento alla Rambo, dall'altro è di nuovo un brevissimo riferimento musicale a svelare agli occhi del lettore, e di Michele che assiste alla scena, la sua vera identità:

Parcheggiata davanti alla casa c'era la 127 di Felice, con le portiere e il bagagliaio aperti. La musica veniva dall'autoradio [...]. Felice è uscito dalla stalla. Era in slip. Ai piedi aveva gli anfibi e intorno al collo il solito fazzoletto nero. Ballava a braccia spalancate e ancheggiava come una danzatrice del vento. (105)

La nascosta e latente omosessualità di Felice si rivela dunque solo quando egli è sicuro di essere da solo, ed egli può così abbandonarsi all'ascolto di Mina. Il titolo della canzone è, fra l'altro, indicativo di questo personaggio il quale, sbruffone a parole, dimostra di "avere paura" quando si tratta di fare sul serio. Questo riferimento ci porta alla fine del romanzo quando, oramai scoperti e in preda al panico, il padre di Michele, Felice e il vecchio venu-to da Roma decidono che è arrivato il momento di uccidere il piccolo Filippo. Ovviamente, nessuno intende prendersi questa responsabilità e il romano si rivolge, a questo punto, a Felice: "Questo è il tuo problema. Sei nato frocio e non lo sai. Hai una certa età, non sei più un piscello. Renditi conto" (196). Ed ancora (riferendosi all'uccisione di Filippo): "Avevi detto che lo facevi tu e ti sei rimangiato tutto. Come dicevi? Io lo apro come un agnello, non c'è problema, io non ho paura, Io sono paracadutista. Io qua, io là. *Chiacchierone*, sei solo un *chiacchierone*" (197).

Conclusioni

Oggetto di questa analisi è stata la funzione che la musica ha nella narrativa di Niccolò Ammaniti, funzione che, come si spera di aver dimostrato, coinvolge diversi aspetti della scrittura. Lo scrittore romano, ben consci dell'importanza culturale e comunicativa che questa forma di intrattenimento ha nel mondo contemporaneo, non esita a farcire le sue storie di riferimenti, impliciti o esplicativi, a tutta una serie di artisti e di generi musi-

²⁰ Interessante notare come tutti gli artisti citati siano italiani: a differenza delle altre storie narrate da Ammaniti, infatti, *Io non ho paura* ha luogo interamente in un universo rurale, dove la musica techno di Fango, o quella spagnoleggante prediletta da Graziano Biglia non sono certo parte di quella cultura e di quel particolare contesto. Dunque, oltre a connotare la vicenda temporalmente, le citazioni musicali di questo romanzo servono a meglio definirne il contesto spaziale e quello sociale. Si veda sul medesimo argomento anche Paolo Giovannetti (79).

cali il cui compito è quello di accompagnare la narrazione e fornire al lettore più attento indizi di cui servirsi per comprendere meglio le strategie testuali dell'autore. In particolare, la musica serve a conferire ai personaggi una luce ulteriore in grado di mettere in evidenza quegli aspetti che il narratore, affidandosi quasi completamente al potere evocativo della musica, volontariamente omette.

Nonostante il lavoro qui presente si sia concentrato unicamente sulle opere di Ammaniti, è utile sottolineare come questa esperienza ermeneutica possa essere, in futuro, riproposta anche per quanto concerne altri autori. Sarebbe inoltre interessante investigare un po' più in profondità e in maniera più organica lo stretto e intimo rapporto che lega la letteratura contemporanea all'universo musicale, un'interazione che ha di sicuro contribuito al rinnovamento del panorama letterario italiano. Artisti quali Nove, Santacroce, Scarpa, Brizzi e Ammaniti, tanto per fare qualche nome, cresciuti ascoltando musica e guardando Videomusic e MTV, hanno dimostrato che non solo è possibile coniugare queste due diverse forme di espressione, e che cultura "alta" e cultura "bassa" possono convivere all'interno dello stesso spazio comunicativo senza togliersi reciprocamente spazio, ma hanno anche dimostrato che, al contrario, musica e letteratura possono coesistere rinnovandosi a vicenda.

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RECENSIONI

Luba Freedman. *The Revival of the Olympian Gods in Renaissance Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. v, 279, 79 b/w ill., index, bibl. ISBN 0-5218-1576-2. £ 60.

One of the main characteristics of the Italian Renaissance was the fascination with the cultural aspects of Classical Antiquity. In this extensively researched monograph, Luba Freedman examines the representations of Greek and Roman gods in Renaissance Italy. She particularly focuses on the sixteenth-century, when fascination with classical deities led to a phenomenon that had not occurred since pagan antiquity: the portrayal of the Olympians as autonomous figures in painting and sculpture. While tending to ignore minor deities, sixteenth-century artists chose to focus instead on the elite family of Greek gods who lived on Mount Olympus. Yet even among these illustrious deities certain figures were more popular than others; Hestia, the modest Goddess of the Hearth was seldom depicted, while Bacchus the flamboyant God of Wine was a popular subject.

Freedman organizes her book into three parts. Part One outlines the terms, concepts and components of the phenomenon; Part Two discusses the impact of the discovery of various artifacts; Part Three focuses on both classical and non-classical elements in Cinquecento art and the conflict that arose in the various schools of thought about the revival of classical pagan models.

Freedman pinpoints the sixteenth-century in particular, because it was then that artists had access not only to statuary (which was mostly fragmented or missing head and limbs) but also an increasing supply of ancient literary works describing the pagan gods. Especially important was the development of Numismatics, because images showing the Olympians and their attributes—the symbols and figures associated with them, were frequently depicted on ancient coins. This range of sources had not been available to earlier Renaissance artists.

Freedman also concentrates on the way in which these resources were used. She found that, despite the fact that they often closely copied the ancient artifacts, Renaissance artists and sculptors did not simply slavishly replicate original works, but also brought to their subjects elements of their own sixteenth-century culture. The result was a unique and fascinating blending of Classical and Renaissance artistic styles, as artists vied with each other to show the mastery of their craft through the depiction of pagan deities.

While the pagan gods had also been acknowledged and portrayed in the art of the Middle Ages, medieval society had viewed them with great suspicion. Denied their autonomy and depicted only in a group setting, the Olympians were seen as demonic figures from a distant and dangerous pagan culture supplanted by Christianity. As such, they were never depicted in the independent splendour they had merited in antiquity. The phenomenon of the sixteenth-century was that the Olympians were once again given autonomy both in paintings and in statues as figures in their own right, surrounded by their pagan attributes.

The problem for artists, especially those living in the late Cinquecento when the Counter-Reformation Church was particularly sensitive to issues of idolatry, was to find a method to portray these gods in such a way that they did not offend the Catholic Church's sensibilities. They devised subtle but ingenious methods in order to achieve this. By changing facial expressions, dress and the actual posture of the deities, the artists deliberately downplayed their majestic qualities. No longer objects of worship, the gods became instead icons, that could be accepted and incorporated into Christian society; nevertheless, Freedman sees sixteenth-century society as ambivalent in its efforts to understand the concept of the past glory of the ancient world, especially its reverence for gods who often displayed the worst characteristics of man. Therefore artists made the gods more palatable to their audience by adding non-classical elements to their works. Just as saints were portrayed with their attributes (the emblems of their sainthood) so did representations of the Olympian gods include the animate or inanimate attributes with which they were traditionally associated. For example, Aphrodite was usually shown with Eros and an apple but, like the other gods and saints, she could also be accompanied by shared attributes. Thus, as well as having her own distinguishing emblems, she shared nautical symbols with Poseidon and her curious horned hairstyle (so appropriately adopted by sixteenth-century Venetian courtesans) with the god Apollo.

Freedman notes the remarkable similarity in the depiction of pagan gods and Christian saints: the important difference being that the gods were depicted in such a way that they lacked the authority of the saints. Representations of certain pagan gods became so closely associated with Biblical figures and saints that they shared an almost symbiotic relationship in the artist's perception. In art and sculpture, Aphrodite, as Goddess of Love, became similar to and associated with Mary Magdalene with her long loose hair and her revealing dress suggesting her former profession, while Apollo, the Sun God, came to be associated with both Christ and in (his capacity as Archer God) with Saint Sebastian. Among the audience and patrons of artists, these connections did not always meet with approval. In his painting the *Last Judgment*, Michelangelo outraged some of his critics when he modeled his Christ on the Apollo Belvedere and depicted him as young, muscular and beardless.

Freedman reveals that artists and sculptors of the sixteenth-century saw the depiction the figures of the Olympian gods as autonomous figures as an important way to show off their talents. The gods provided an opportunity to display the naked or semi-naked form, which revealed the skill of the artist in a more dramatic way than was possible with clothed figures. This was a window of opportunity that artists seized and that prominent citizens, secular princes and cardinals encouraged by their patronage. This meticulous work will be of great interest to scholars and students of the Art History of the Renaissance.

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John Picchione. *The New Avant-Garde in Italy. Theoretical Debate and Poetic Practices*. Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 2004. Pp. ix, 250. ISBN 0802089941. \$ 50 US.

The Italian *neoavanguardia* or New Avant-garde has received considerable critical attention in Italy since it burst onto the cultural scene in the early part of the 1960s, but it has infrequently been the subject of scholarship in the English-speaking world. One of the possible reasons for this neglect might well be the very poetics and practices produced by the poets and theoreticians of this group. John Picchione's book makes a fundamentally important contribution to the study of the Italian lyric in the mid-twentieth century and will certainly go a long way to redressing this imbalance.

The first two of the book's ten chapters are devoted to providing a historical and theoretical context for the work of poets appearing in the 1961 anthology *I Novissimi – Poesie per gli anni '60*, and for the writers who contributed to the cultural debate in the pages of such journals as *Il Verri* and *Il Menabò*. These intellectuals constituted the so-called Gruppo 63. An entire chapter is then dedicated to each of the five poets anthologized in *I Novissimi*, namely, Alfredo Giuliani, Elio Pagliarani, Edoardo Sanguineti, Antonio Porta, and Nanni Balestrini, with the final two chapters given over to examining the experimentation in concrete and verbal-visual poetry that occurred in Italy during the course of the same decade, and to evaluating the overall impact of the movement on Italian literature and society.

With his framing remarks, Picchione is masterful in identifying the aesthetic, linguistic, and political dimensions of the work of both the poets and theoreticians active in Italy during the early Sixties. The importance of the Novissimi's call for a repudiation of what they perceived to be a stale literary tradition, in the name of experimentation and radical societal and linguistic renewal, represents the group's anticipation of many crucial concerns of postmodern thinkers: the nature of language, its relationship to external reality, the role of literature and of the intellectual in the post-industrial age.

Perhaps even more significant, as Picchione argues so eloquently, are the debates involving the Gruppo 63, the most famous members of which were Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco. It is indeed in this environment of intense exchange of critical views that seminal works, such as Eco's *Opera aperta* (The Open Work) were created, with their focus on the status of the text and the collaboration of the author and the reader in the construction of meaning. Picchione's impressive achievement lies in the balanced presentation of the many views expressed in the vehicles named above (i.e. the *Novissimi* anthology, the journals, and the books written in this period). He concisely and accurately identifies the core issues in the often oppositional arguments advanced by the participants in the discourse, but he also intervenes appropriately to point out the inconsistencies or limitations to be found in some of these lines of reasoning about the nature of language and literature.

A fundamental aspect of the poetry of the Novissimi is the so-called elimination or reduction of the subject, the agent that interprets the external world and

phenomena in the traditional lyric and conveys the constituted impressions to the reader who, in traditional communication, passively accepts the information. Each of the five poets examined in chapters 3 to 7, in one way or another attempts to achieve this effect, thereby protesting the loss of the expressiveness of language. In Alfredo Giuliani's work, along the lines of Dylan Thomas, Picchione tells us, the "I" is "often assimilated into the life of the objects, thus deterring direct self-analysis" (82). In his pursuit of a lyric that privileges the objects of perception, Giuliani "begins to privilege a schizoid and paranoid language that [...] gives voice to the senselessness and the dementedness of the quotidian" (83).

Elio Pagliarani's "reduction of the 'I'" is realized not through the adoption of Giuliani's "language of pathology and disorder" (97), but through the technique of collage of voices originating in different areas of society, a heteroglossia of sorts, that conveys the realities of daily urban life. Picchione's challenge in this chapter, and indeed in the entire volume, is to articulate Pagliarani's position within an avant-garde that rejects social commentary in the name of a fossilized language even as it formulates meaningful observations that indicate social commitment and critique. In the end, Picchione manages to square the circle by arguing that Pagliarani breaks with tradition by amalgamating various genres and linguistic registers that "shift poetry towards the modern epic and dramatic verse" (106). In this project, Pagliarani is inspired by the writings of Pound, Eliot, and Joyce: icons of modernism. As a result, the positions of the avant-garde, oscillating as they do between modernism and postmodernism, become evident and are reaffirmed throughout the book.

Edoardo Sanguineti's poetry "represents a decisive turning point for post-war Italian letters" (114). The modernist leitmotif of alienation is transformed into the postmodern alienation of language itself in the work of this poet, especially in his *Laborintus*. Alluding to the labyrinth, Sanguineti formulates a desecration of contemporary society, exposing "the swamp of capitalist alienation in which the conscience is lost in the falsity and contradictions of bourgeois ideologies" (115). In this, he too would appear to indulge in a sort of realist or Neo-realist depiction of middle-class values. However, rather than achieve such a denunciation by means of conventional language, Sanguineti relies on a "plurilinguistic, babelic text in which fragments of sentences" (115) are combined into a disorienting montage.

Antonio Porta's quest for renewal of poetic language within the general parameters of the *neoavanguardia* is characterized by Picchione as "a nomadic conception of writing" (129). Influenced by the phenomenology of Jaspers and Merleau-Ponty, Porta's poetry "features a visual approach to reality and an adherence to external events as strategies for bracketing the 'I' and its inner concerns" (129). As do the other writers of this group, Porta produces what appears to be a disjoined or fragmented verse, one that communicates "a state of decay, cruelty and social atrocities" (130). Once more, experimentation and metalinguistic concerns mingle with ethical and social issues. Picchione must constantly be mindful of the delicate balance between linguistic experimentation for the sake of a new expressiveness, on the one hand, and the formulation of a comprehensible or coherent world-view, on the other, which means that the avant-garde poet is constantly in

danger of slipping back into the trap that he tries to escape. Picchione is obliged to reconcile the statements that affirm the role of poetry as “a way of searching for some forms of truth” (132) with assertions that poetry is for Porta “a discourse reduced to zero: the reduction of language to zero corresponding to the negation of the world” (135).

For Picchione, Nanni Balestrini’s poetry is “one of the group’s most radical attempts to break down literary practices tied to principles of subjectivity or to representational canons” (148). The reader finds neither the reflections of the subject nor narration in Balestrini’s “revolt against all forms of poetic conventions” (152). The author gathers fragments of material strewn in the mass media and juxtaposes them on the page to generate an image of disorder and meaninglessness. As part of his strategy of sabotaging the communicative process, Balestrini composes concrete and electronic poems in which he strives to make the purpose of poetry the manipulation of the linguistic sign, separating it from its semantic properties. This direction of creativity allows Picchione to consider the development of technological, concrete and verbal-visual poetry that parallels chronologically the work of the Novissimi.

By relating the theories and creative works of the *neoavanguardia* to the historical avant-garde, the experimentalism in Pop Art, contemporary music, and the theories of Roland Barthes, John Picchione has produced what is clearly a most comprehensive and insightful study on the Italian New Avant-garde that is likely to remain a cornerstone of future studies.

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Alessia Ricciardi. *The Ends of Mourning: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003. Pp. 266. ISBN 0-8047-4776-8.

The Ends of Mourning offers nothing less than an all-embracing hermeneutic approach to postmodernism. Based on, but not limited to, Freud’s concept of mourning, Ricciardi’s book argues that a culturally meaningful, morally accountable relationship to the past requires a commitment to working through historical loss. For Freud, mourning involved the progressive detachment of the libido from the lost object, a process accomplished by the reinvestment and hypercathectis of each bit of related memory. Ricciardi does not expect art works to enact the Freudian mourning process in order to establish an ethically responsible relationship to history, but she does ask that texts of memory repropose and reinterpret the past in ways that invite our active critical and moral engagement with its lessons. Mourning, for Ricciardi, thus becomes a metaphor for the ethically and cognitively demanding work of confronting historical loss.

This metaphor is developed with great richness and sophistication through a dialectical strategy in which Ricciardi reads back and forth between two sets of texts to establish either an oppositional or a complementary relationship which allows her

to continually refine her theoretical focus. In Chapter One, “The Twilight of Mourning,” she sets Freud against Lacan, in such a way that the latter’s focus on absence, or lack, as the structural foundation of psychic life, throws into high relief the former’s notion of loss as historical, contingent, and therefore amenable to replacement. The contrast between Freudian and Lacanian approaches to mourning leads Ricciardi to distinguish between two kinds of postmodernism, one of which will serve as the basis for her impassioned plea for cultural renewal. Ricciardi links Lacanian psychoanalysis with the anti-historicist impulse of postmodernism—the tendency to reduce the past to questions of style, to indulge in nostalgia for its own sake, heedless of the critical demands that historical citation entails. Ricciardi applies the adjectives “populist” and “consumerist” to this strain of postmodernism, since it is a product of mass media culture and invites commercialization. Despite her animus against this form of postmodernism, Ricciardi does not advocate a return to high modernist art, with its mania for the new, its focus on the crisis of the subject, and its penchant for historical passivity. What she fervently advocates, instead, is a critically engaged postmodernism—a position she expertly develops in connection with the work of Proust, Pasolini, and Godard.

In keeping with her dialectical method, Ricciardi reads Proust alongside Benjamin. What emerges is the indebtedness of the German theorist to the French novelist for his much celebrated notion of “aura.” A careful analysis of Benjamin’s own evolving approach to the auratic leads Ricciardi back to Proust, who becomes a transitional figure in the movement toward postmodernism as a stylistic recuperation of the past. Of greatest interest to Italianists is the section on Pasolini, which prompted this reader to re-screen *Teorema* (after a hiatus of 25 years!), and to revise, however unmournfully, her earlier approach to the film. This chapter begins with an analysis of Pasolini’s relationship to the ghost of Marxism past, and to the “haunted history” so poignantly represented in “Le ceneri di Gramsci.” *Teorema* thus emerges as a double enactment of mourning—both for the sacred, embodied in the messianic guest, and for revolutionary political activism, motivated, in an aimless and futile way, by the guest’s sudden and traumatizing departure. Reading *Teorema* in tandem with Pasolini’s ground-breaking essay “The Cinema of Poetry,” Ricciardi applies the filmmaker’s theory to his practice by means of a brilliant technical observation. Ricciardi notes that the two stylemes which Pasolini associates with a poetic language of cinema—those of obsessive reframing of shots, and of characters’ exiting from the frame—recur throughout *Teorema* in conjunction with the film’s twin themes of repetition and mourning.

In addition to offering an inspired interpretation of an individual film, Ricciardi’s study makes a courageous (and I think successful) attempt to situate Pasolini within the various currents of postmodernism. In so doing, she accomplishes the daunting task of adding an important chapter to the already voluminous critical studies on Pasolini—criticism, which in recent years has reached the level of a cultural industry. Ricciardi argues that despite his wanton borrowing of earlier styles (his debt to art historical models from the Renaissance and Mannerist periods is well known), and despite his promiscuous mixing of high and low cultural registers, Pasolini does not indulge in the consumerist nostalgia that charac-

terizes postmodernism at its worst. Nor can he be seen as a cultural reactionary, celebrating the archaic and the mythic in a rejection of any progressive notion of history. Nor indeed can he be aligned with the modernist avant-garde with its frenzy for novelty and inevitable contempt for the past. Pasolini's filmmaking, instead, exemplifies the Derridean notion of "spectropoetics" that Ricciardi advocates as a cinematic antidote to the consumerist, populist postmodernism that she deplores. "In contrast to the stylistic fetishism of the past and celebration of retro typical of commercial motion pictures," Ricciardi insists, "spectral cinema relentlessly rephrases the question of mourning, not as an exercise in nostalgia, but as a call to reinterpretation and thus to change."

In her chapter on Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema*, Ricciardi argues for the importance of this film to the notion of a critically engaged postmodernism. Documenting the history of the medium, whose end has been signaled by the advent of digital technology, Godard's film may be seen as an example of mourning that serves to challenge and resist the superficial, commodifying tendencies of postmodern media culture.

With *The Ends of Mourning*, Ricciardi has made an impressive contribution to the fields of French, Italian, Comparative Literature, Film Studies, and Cultural Studies. She moves gracefully and productively across the divides of national cultures, media, and disciplines, and juxtaposes them in ways that provide for rich comparative and contrastive discoveries. The result is a wise and profound book in which the voices of a number of great continental thinkers have been fully internalized by the critic, who has made them her own, before applying them with sophistication and insight to an original, even surprising assortment of texts. Italianists will be especially enlightened by Ricciardi's placement of Pasolini among the ghosts to be mourned, and among the guides to how such mourning can generate a critically engaged postmodernism.

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